



The photo shows Thomas Peever's shop at number 37 Rose Mount now a private house. It was donated by Mike Weir who ran the shop as a tobacconist sweet shop and general store well into the 1980s.

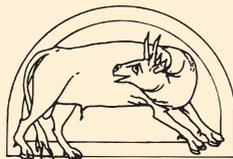
Oxton Society

Annual General Meeting and Celebration of Achievements

venue: **Williamson Art Gallery**

Wednesday 14th September 2016

Time: 18.30-21.00



THE OXTON SOCIETY

Programme

Refreshments will be available upon arrival from 18.15-19.00

Annual General Meeting (AGM) 19.00-19.45

1. Chair's Welcome
2. Minutes of last AGM September 10th. 2015
3. Matters arising
4. Summary of highlights and achievements in 2015-16
5. Chair's Report and approval of report
6. Approval of Treasurer's Report
7. Nomination and election of Executive Committee members and officers
8. Motions (to be notified prior to the meeting to the Secretary)
9. Questions
10. Oxton Society Awards
 - * Design Award (nominations to the Secretary required for Residential and Non-Residential properties by August 31st)
 - * Outstanding Contribution to Oxton Awards
11. Close of AGM

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19.45-21.00 Speaker and Panel Discussion

*** Oxton Society in partnership: welcome to Oxton Business Club, Oxton Cricket Club and Friends of the Arno**

*** Green Plaques for Oxton Notables – speakers will illustrate a number of potential candidates**

Meeting will close at 21.00

Minutes of Oxton Society AGM Sept 10th 2015

Present: 102 members of the Society and representatives of local businesses attended the 2015 AGM.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from 94 members.

2. Welcome

The Chair of the Society, Rhiannon Evans, welcomed members to the AGM.

3. Minutes of the last AGM

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

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Report

The Chair, Rhiannon Evans, introduced the annual report, which had been made available to members. The report summarised the highlights and achievements of 2014-15 under the four long term strategic aims of the Society:

Promoting and securing high standards of planning, landscape and architecture to preserve, improve and develop the area and its environs, which included: involvement with planning and licensing applications and ongoing concerns about planning issues in the village; working with Wirral Borough Council and others to improve the environment; discussions about the former bank site; provision of 48 hanging baskets with automatic watering system; consultations through the Tree Group on 43 applications for work on trees; discussions on the concern of residents and businesses about the future viability of the village as a shopping centre.

Enhancing public awareness of Oxton's history, architecture and environment, which included: production of four Newsletters and History periodicals; use of Facebook, Twitter, website and email to engage with members and the wider community to publicise the Society and activities; provision of a programme of Oxton Heritage Walks and a History Open Day Fostering community and business involvement to encourage civic pride, including: a successful Secret Gardens event attended by over 3,000 visitors, with proceeds being shared with three local charities; a Christmas Lights event; initiatives to try and improve the cleanliness of the streets; a major membership recruitment drive and membership is now around 800 individuals, household, and corporate members.

Maintaining the Society on a sound and sustainable basis, including working in partnership with others: collaborating with a wide range of local organizations, including Friends of the Arno, the Williamson Art Gallery, Oxton Artists, charities and schools and local councillors; involvement with the Wirral Conservation Forum, whose first Chair, Alan Chape, is Secretary to the Oxton Society; maintaining a sound financial position, with Secret Gardens remaining the main source of income apart from membership fees; welcoming a new team of members to the Coordinating Group and Task Group for the Secret Gardens.

Looking ahead to 2015-16, the Society has the following priorities:

- Conservation and planning – working closely with Council senior officers to ensure that conservation and planning issues are not diminished following the slimming down and restructuring of the Council’s specialist conservation team.
- Oxton Village Centre – working with businesses, members and council officers to maximize the potential for a thriving village centre.
- Partnerships – with Wirral Borough Council, the Conservation Area Forum, businesses and other organizations.
- Financial sustainability – reviewing membership subscription rates, which have remained unchanged for many years.
- Succession planning for the Committee and other Society roles.

Members approved the Annual Report.

6. Financial Report

The Treasurer, Jane Horton, introduced her annual report and the Financial Statement. She reported that around £500 more had been spent during 2014-15 than in the previous year, and that there was a carry forward of £12,500. She was expecting some capital expenditure during the current year for Christmas Lights and for a risk assessment for the hanging baskets. Sales of Secret Gardens tickets this year were up 150 on the previous event, and the distributions to the charities would be slightly higher. She thanked the B:Ox bakery for their donation of £600 from their village centre stall.

In response to the Financial Report, members raised a number of issues:

- The costs of the Annual General Meeting, which was significantly higher than the previous year. The Treasurer reported that printing

costs of AGM material had been high, and that the costs of canapés had been included, which had not been the case in 2013 when the canapés had been donated by members. She felt that the cost was very good value for an event for over 100 people which was both an AGM and a social event. Previously, separate events had been held for the AGM and a social event for garden owners and bringing the two events together had made savings.

- The amount of £607 for 'HSBC site' was queried – the Treasurer indicated that this had been for use of a solicitor to correspond with the owners of the site.
- The amount of £1,060 for the History Group was also queried – this was for production of the History periodical, costs of the History Open Day and the annual subscription to the Findmypast website
- A member asked why only £175 had been spent on tree planting in the financial year, and the Treasurer indicated that the budget was £900, to pay for 6 trees, but that the bills did not always come forward in the same financial year that the trees were planted
- The costs of the Newsletter were queried, and whether costs could be reduced by use of an e-letter. The Chair reported that 20% of members still did not use e-mail, and many other members still preferred a hard copy. However, it could be possible to have an 'opt-in' to an e-mail version, and this would be discussed by the Committee.

The accounts were formally adopted, and thanks expressed to the Treasurer for her work.

7. Election of Officers and Committee

It was reported that there was a maximum of 13 members on the Committee, along with 4 Officers. 9 nominations had been received for re-election as members, along with 2 nominations for new members, and the 4 Officers were standing for re-election.

The AGM re-elected the following to serve as officers:

- Chair – Rhiannon Evans
- Vice-Chair – Jeff Willis
- Secretary – Alan Chape
- Treasurer – Jane Horton

The following were re-elected to serve on the Committee: Steve Ferguson, Ann Fordham, Patrick Toosey, Steve Weber, Dave Barden, John Booth, Bob Knowles, Jenny O'Sullivan, Carolyn Weber

Cllr Pat Williams and Cllr Alan Brighthouse would continue as co-opted members. Four vacancies remained on the Committee and the Chair invited anyone interested in joining the Committee to contact her.

8. Motions

No motions had been received for the Annual General Meeting.

9. Questions from Members

There were no further questions from members.

10. Oxtan Design Award

Steve Weber introduced the Oxtan Design Award nominees. In the past the Society had sometimes had few nominations for the award, but this year there had been 6 high quality nominations. All showed great care and sensitivity to the special character of the individual properties and an awareness of the contribution the work would make to enhancing the character of the Conservation Area. The judging panel had a very difficult task and it was a close decision. One of the nominations was for a project which was still in progress and this will be re-submitted for the 2016 awards. The Oxtan Design Awards for 2015 were awarded to:

- Heather and David Alcock for the renovation and repair of their fine 1900 house at 13 Mount Pleasant.
- Richard and Sarah Azurdia for the rebuilding of an original sandstone boundary wall at 2 Roslin Road.

The winning projects, and the other three nominations, will be publicised in the Newsletter and on the website.

11. Outstanding Contribution to Oxtan Awards

Jeff Willis introduced the nominees for the Outstanding Contribution to Oxtan Awards, which were awarded to:

- Sandra Griffiths of 'The Quandary' for her outstanding contribution as a champion of the village and the Oxtan Society. She has sold Secret Gardens tickets for many years and become a focal point for the on-line ticket sales, promoted the village and the society, registered new members and been an active business partner.
- Phill Jenkins, graphic designer, for his outstanding contribution over four years, transforming the look of the Society's publications, flyers, banners and Secret Gardens programmes, as well as helping to introduce the Society's new e-mail system.

12. Vote of thanks

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their support during the year, with particular thanks to Secret Gardens owners, to volunteers in all capacities, to village businesses and to the Officers and other members of the Committee.

13. Close of AGM

Rhiannon Evans thanked all members for their attendance and for their contributions to the discussions, and closed the Annual General Meeting at 7.45 p.m.

CMW/September 2015



Chair's Report for 2015-16

I am pleased to report on another very successful and hardworking year for the Oxtton Society. The summary below reminds the members of the key tasks which were identified at the end of the 2015 Annual Report for action by the Executive Committee in 2015-16 and signposts the progress in the main report. Progress against the four long-term strategic aims of the Society outlining our main purposes and public benefits is reported in sections 1-4.

Summary of key tasks and issues identified for action in 2015-16

- **Conservation and planning.** *In response to the slimming down and restructuring of the Council's specialist conservation team and the reduction in its capacity to respond to planning issues and to support the development of its Management Plan, the Society, working with the Wirral Conservation Area Forum, will work closely with the senior officers to ensure that conservation and planning issues are not diminished. See 1 a-d.*
- **Succession planning.** *Despite "new blood" this year additional volunteers are urgently needed to come forward to shadow and take on existing roles on the Executive Committee or for Secret Gardens, as Committee members take on new roles, retire or move on. See 3 d.*
- **Oxtton Village Centre.** *The Executive Committee will continue to work with council officers, members and businesses to maximise the potential for a thriving village centre. See 1a-c.*
- **Financial sustainability.** *As indicated in the 2014 Annual Report, membership subscription rates will be reviewed in 2015-2016. See 4 a.*

Progress against Strategic Objectives

1. Promote and secure high standards of planning, landscape and architecture to preserve, improve and develop the area and its environs

a. The emergence of an Oxton business club. Following the 2015 AGM, where the Village Centre was the focus of the panel discussion, a number of village businesses have formed a business club. It has been begun collaborating and coordinating communications with the society. This includes discussion about the joint action in relation to the Secret Gardens, the actual slight event and the marketing of the village centre.

b. The preparation of a retail action plan by Wirral borough Council in conjunction with the society and local businesses. This has highlighted the problems of inadequate and irresponsible parking and the need to secure the development of the former bank site. Both of these problems are now being actively pursued by Council officers with the support of the society and local businesses.

c. The continuing relative vibrancy of the village centre with the advent of the number of new businesses with the pleasing facades ink colours that add to the attractiveness of the centre. This is part of the changing nature of the village from predominantly walk-in shopping to more diverse range of restaurants, fashion shops, financial, personal and fitness services.

d. planning. The society was consulted on 18 planning applications and objected only to three of these where it believe proposals could cause harm to the character of the area. The comments were guided by the Oxton conservation area management plan (approved by Wirral Borough Council in 2011), to which the Society made a major contribution.

e. Hanging baskets. The society fully funded 48 hanging baskets, reviewed the fixtures and made essential repairs (at a cost of £2250); the automatic watering system was made fully operational.

f. Trees the tree group was consulted on 38 applications for felling or maintenance work, including 10 trees with tree preservation orders (TPOs). A significant number were for felling, particularly where the tree had outgrown its location in the urban environment, to which the society did not object as it is sympathetic to the problems of large trees in small gardens. However, no trees were planted through the societies tree-planting fund as there was no response to calls for applications. The intention is to be more proactive promoting the funds In the forthcoming year.

2. Enhance public awareness of Oxton's history, architecture and environment

a. Communication and PR. Four newsletters and history periodicals were designed and edited by a small team and all were printed in colour by Impressions in the Village. Additional posters were designed for one-off events. The re-designed website was further improved to include a range of reference material, planning advice and links to other social media. The site had over 18,000 visitors with 50% in May and June. Facebook now has 318 followers and is an active site for the discussion of the society's events and activities. The Twitter account has been used to support the promotion of history walks, Secret Gardens and other events. Followers have more than doubled to 303, many of whom retweet the Society's tweets which gives very wide penetration into other groups and businesses on the Wirral. Facebook and Twitter have resulted in a wider profile for the Society, greater publicity for Secret Gardens and immediate interactions with members and wider communities.

b. History. More than 14 Oxton East and West heritage walks were scheduled including for six local groups. The annual History Open Day was attended by over 180 people and a very interesting exhibition of new material on Oxton suffragettes was displayed. A number of Oxton history talks were delivered and a major display was mounted at the Wirral History and Heritage Fair at Birkenhead Town Hall in March. Work on the digital archive and a possible publication will continue.

3. Foster community and business involvement to encourage civic pride.

a. Secret Gardens. Despite inclement weather, Secret Gardens 2015, the first June event, was more successful than the previous year and, although expenditure was increased (road closure costs in particular), more money was shared with the collaborating charities: £17,500 between Birkenhead Woodcraft Folk, Tam O'Shanter Urban Farm, Viking Youth Club and Centre and Oxton Society Village projects. Twenty-four gardens were opened, over 3,000 visitors attended (with 2635 tickets sold) and 475 volunteers assisted in planning, and running the event.

b. Christmas Lights. Unfortunately, for the first time the Christmas lights switch-on had to be cancelled because of a severe weather forecast. As well as the disappointment, the income from mulled wine and mince pies was not there to offset the costs of the lights. The lights were switched on a week later to coincide with the Business Club's activities.

c. Dog dirt. The Society continues to take the initiative in trying to improve the cleanliness of the streets: it provided 20,000 biodegradable dog dirt bags from 12 dispensers to encourage dog owners to clear up after their pets. However, there continues to be too many isolated examples of anti-social behaviour.

d. Membership. A major membership recruitment drive was undertaken resulting in 64 new members. Allowing for 25 lapsed memberships, the net increase was 39. There are currently in the region of 1,000 individual, household and corporate members in total; 82% of members use email; 83% make their fees eligible for gift-aid and almost 50% of members pay for four years or more. There has been a positive response from new volunteers coming forward for Secret Gardens and the Committee

4. Maintain the Society on a sound and sustainable basis, including working in partnership with others

a. Income. The overall financial position of the Society is sound but too heavily reliant on Secret Gardens to fund all the Society's activities and other fundraising opportunities are being explored. An increase in membership fees was approved by the Executive Committee, as reported in the February newsletter, and will be implemented in August 2016. No objections were received.

b. Partnerships. The Society has collaborated with, and been supported by, a very wide range of organisations including: local churches, the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, charities, schools, local businesses and Oxtan Artists. It has excellent relationships with its local Councillors who are keen to support the work of the Society. The formal agreements with Ness Gardens and the Friends of the Arno bring mutual benefits. The Wirral Conservation Forum under its chair, Alan Chape, Secretary to the Oxtan Society, has continued to have positive discussions with the Council and with English Heritage about significant developments which could benefit Oxtan and the other Wirral conservation societies.

Looking Ahead

Members will know that the context in which conservation societies are taking forward their core business remains challenging in the light of reduced local authority budgets and considerable uncertainty following the referendum. In the light of this and its current capacity, the Executive Committee has identified the following key priorities for 2016-2017:

- **Secure the development of the former bank site.** While there have been some signs of activity on the site by developers, the Society still has no confidence in the completion of the scheme for shops, offices and residential accommodation. The initial planning permission was given in 2007 and the current permission expires this year. We will continue to press the Council and the developer to complete the scheme or to sell to another buyer who would undertake the development. A scheme to release existing parking spaces for visitors and shoppers needs to be explored further.
- **Continue to collaborate with the Oxton Business Club on matters of common interest.** This will include major events and the marketing of the centre to a wider audience of potential visitors and customers.
- **Diversify fund-raising** sources and increase income streams.
- **Plan for succession.** Continue to ensure that the Committee attracts new members and that new volunteers are recruited to support the main activities.

Celebrate Oxton's famous men and women with a *green plaque* scheme.

There is much solid work upon which to build and the Executive Committee is indebted to garden owners who opened their gardens, members of the Secret Gardens Task Group and to the teams of hundreds of volunteers who contributed their time and expertise throughout the year. I would also like to thank departing Committee member Jenny O' Sullivan, who has taken a key role in Secret Gardens alongside Jay Little and Alan & Lesley McGarrity. Huge thanks go to the Executive Committee members who worked with enormous energy, commitment and good humour on your behalf throughout the year. Finally, a warm vote of thanks to Pat Williams who in her role as a local councillor has supported and helped the Committee for many years. Pat has now stepped down as a local councillor and we wish her good fortune and good health. She will always be welcome to attend the Committee whenever she wishes.

Rhiannon Evans Chair *June 2016*

Further information on the Society's work can be found on the website (www.oxtonsociety.org.uk) on Twitter (@oxton2) and on Facebook pages (Oxton Society), which are updated regularly.

Accounts

Summary of the annual accounts for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016

Year ended 28 Feb 2015			Year ended 28 Feb 2016	
Income	Expenditure		Income	Expenditure
£1,874	£118	Administration	£1,865	
	£360	Memberships & donations		
£20	£672	Gift aid		£360
	£625	Accountancy		£653
	£607	AGM		£660
	£144	Subscriptions		
	£250	HSBC site		£285
	£1,397	Website hosting		
		Storage		£1,940
		Newsletters		£226
		Other		
£1,894	£4,173		£1,865	£4,124
		Strategic aims		
£6,403	£500	OxSoc Secret Gardens	£7,001	£546
	£2,534	Dog fouling bags		£2,752
£35		Hanging baskets	£140	
£35	£1,060	Baskets watering system		£1,213
£100	£275	History group & periodical	£62	£1,242
£4,099	£4,389	Tree planting		£2,343
		Xmas lights	£600	
		Village tree lights		
	£180	Walls data		
£75	£18	Other		£18
£10,747	£8,956		£7,803	£8,114
		Totals for the year	£9,668	£12,238
£12,641	£13,129	Carried forward	£9,527	
£12,097				

Secret Gardens		
Secret Gardens 2014		Secret Gardens 2015
£8,076		£7,237
£8,576		£11,429
£6,008		£6,921
	£7,256	
	£9,000	£8,086
	£6,404	£10,500
		£7,001
£22,660	£22,660	£25,587
		£25,587
	Ticket numbers	
1346	£6 Tickets (pre- sales)	1206
1072	£8 Tickets (on the day)	1429
2418	Total tickets sold	2635

The accounts were examined by Oddpenny Ltd, Chartered Accountants.