



OXFORD PRESERVATION TRUST

NEWSLETTER MARCH 2007

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Photographs: Filip Gierlinski @ Filskifoto; Charlotte Wood; OPT

OPENING DOORS OPENING MINDS

Open weekend—23-24 June

Over the weekend of 23 and 24 June we are inviting Oxford residents to come and explore their city – Town and Gown will be opening their doors and providing a warm welcome with trails, activities, guided tours, themed walks, tea, lemonade and brass bands, vintage bus trips, and much more. The events will centre around Oxford Castle, the newest symbol of civic pride, where a ‘mediaeval fayre’ will animate the Castleyard with demonstrators and re-enactors revealing what life might have been like at Oxford Castle a thousand years ago!

‘Opening Doors, Opening Minds’ has been made possible by a grant to the Trust of £34,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project, a partnership with the University of Oxford, aims to encourage young people and local families to explore and understand more about the rich history of their city through its built heritage. Four key events in four very special places will take place throughout the week beginning



Photograph: Tracy Slator



*Saïd Business School
Photograph: Gaelle Jolly*

18 June. In Darwin’s ‘Great Debate’ hall at the University Museum of Natural History local secondary school students will be presenting the results of their water-themed research projects to a panel of experts. Members of the public will have the chance to view the young people’s project work on display in the upper galleries of the museum throughout the week. At Convocation House, the seat of Charles I’s Royalist Parliament, young public speakers will compete in teams, on a Millennium theme, before specially invited adjudicators, while the modern architecture of the amphitheatre of the Saïd Business School will provide the striking setting for an early evening concert programme by the County Music Service. The nearby Jam Factory will provide inspiration for project work by a local primary school and an exhibition on the history of the building and of Frank Cooper’s Marmalade, with opportunities for jam making and tasting!

The Trust has been delighted by the positive response from participating venues and we hope that you will bring friends and family to join with us in discovering something new about your city.

Please keep the dates in your diaries. Further details will be sent to members nearer the time and will become available on www.openingdoorsopeningminds.org.uk

The wider programme for the 'Oxfordshire 2007' festival, which was launched on 5 January from the Castleyard, can be found on www.oxfordshire2007.com

Volunteers needed—23 June

We will be needing the assistance of volunteer stewards for 'Opening Doors Opening Minds' on the day and in the weeks leading up to it.

If you would like to assist or know someone who does please contact Jane Baldwin in the office for more details and an information pack.

SIMONS LAND, HEYFORD HILL



*View from Simons Land, February 2007
Photograph: Eluned Hallas*

We are delighted to acknowledge the generous donation of a half-acre plot of land at Heyford Hill by Mr & Mrs Simons of Boars Hill. This charming piece of land, which used to be the mooring plot for a former college barge, lies off Heyford Hill Lane. An Environmental Management Plan will be commissioned to help us understand our latest acquisition and to inform our future decision making.

This acquisition, together with the Tait land, gives the Trust ownership of considerable river frontage on opposite banks of the Thames at Kennington and Sandford. We are pleased to be in a position to preserve this important river entrance to Oxford.

DONATION FROM HINKSEY FIELDS PROTECTION GROUP

In November we were delighted to receive a cheque for over £8,000 from the Hinksey Fields Protection Group as the culmination of their successful campaign to stop a Science Park being built on the west side of Oxford between North and South Hinksey.

In 1989 hundreds of Oxford people came together as The Hinksey Fields Protection Group to act against plans which would have included an hotel, leisure and conference centre, housing and industrial units. It is thanks to them that people today can continue to enjoy the open green setting of the City from the west, and the world famous views of the dreaming spires from the surrounding hills. In 2006, with its part of the job done, the Group decided to disband and to donate the money remaining in its funds to the Trust, who continue to campaign to maintain the green setting of Oxford.

Roger Ainsworth, Chairman of the Hinksey Fields Protection Group, says: 'We are pleased to pass on the mantle to the Trust and to support their work in this way, in the sure knowledge that they will watch over the fields that we fought so hard to save. I am glad the battle was won—imagining a blot on that particular landscape does not bear thinking about'. The Trust is immensely grateful to the Hinksey Fields Protection



*Trust Director Mrs Dance, Professor Roger Ainsworth and Mrs Valerie Wales of the Hinksey Fields Protection Group.
Photograph: Greg Smolonski/Photovibe*

Group for saving the Fields for Oxford, and delighted to have received this donation towards our work. We will do our very best to continue to match the success of the Group into the future.

Money was raised through the sale of **Ken Messer prints** of the view of Oxford from Hinksey which were commissioned by Mrs Valerie Wales. Mrs Wales has kindly donated the remaining prints to the Trust.

Prints for sale

Copies of the Ken Messer print (*pictured opposite*) can be purchased for £20 each including postage and packaging. To order, please send a cheque payable to Oxford Preservation Trust with a covering note stating the number of prints required and your name and address to:

Oxford Preservation Trust, 10 Turn Again Lane, St Ebbes, Oxford OX1 1QL.

OTHER LAND NEWS

The Ashmolean Natural History Society Rare Plant Group has reported on the success of the **Creeping Marshwort** (Natural England RR706), which was introduced on Trust land at North Hinksey. The main patch seems to be increasing, and there are signs of new self-seeded areas.

Creeping Marshwort (*Apium repens*) is a small, creeping umbellifer which grows in open, wet, permanent pasture subject to winter flooding. It spreads both by runners and seeding. Creeping Marshwort is on the Endangered Species list, and at one time the English population was restricted to one site in Oxfordshire. The ANHS Rare Plants Group is closely involved in monitoring the existing population and drawing up and executing a detailed action plan for the species. The introduction of a small patch of plants at North Hinksey in 1996 was part of this plan, and we are delighted that the plant seems to like its new home.

The Trust will be looking for a new tenant at one of its two houses in **East St Helen Street in Abingdon** this summer. If you know of anyone interested in becoming the Trust's tenant/custodian in one of these special properties,

please contact the office for more details. One of the conditions of tenancy is that the houses are open to the public by prior arrangement. We regret that parking is also extremely limited and pets are not allowed.

Artweeks—19-27 May

26a East St Helen Street will be hosting displays of sculptural and functional ceramics by Alison Jones and woodturning by Martin Edwards as part of Oxfordshire Artweeks - Visual Arts Festival from May 19-27. Opening times are 12 to 6pm every day and until 8 pm on Thursday.



We were saddened to hear of the sudden death, in January, of **Mr Peter Hedges**, our tenant at Marston. Mr Hedges had farmed the Trust land at Marston for 30 years.

OXFORD CASTLE

Following the opening of Unlocked – Oxford Castle in June and a busy summer period, September saw the completion of the Castleyard and launch of **the Key Learning Centre**, named to reflect our aim to open up access to the site's history to everyone. Partners in the project were invited to a party to celebrate the launch, with entertainment by Morris Dancing groups and the Oxford Waits.



September launch—Photograph: Mark Bassett/The Source

Since then many **schoolchildren** have visited the site and attended workshops with Learning and Access Officer Helen de May. We are delighted to see the final piece of the jigsaw in place, with local children finding out about their town's history and teachers making the most of the educational resources Miss de May has developed over the past year. The Key also offers a series of **lectures, walks and activities** for adults. With a wide range of topics, there is something to suit everyone—check the list of events and booking form included with this newsletter.



Photograph: Filip Gierlinski @ Filskifoto

The new café, **CaféFOOD**, also opened in the autumn. **CaféFOOD** is run by Alison Measham, a local caterer who used to run the Oxford Sandwich Company in the Covered Market, and is proving a very popular addition to the site. The freshly prepared sandwiches, soups and delicious cakes, all made with locally sourced ingredients, have been winning many devotees, and the coffee, arguably the best in town, is also well worth the trip. The café also provides a catering service, for events at the Castle and elsewhere.



CaféFOOD and the Castleyard—Photograph: Charlotte Wood

There have been a number of additional attractions to Oxford Castle over the winter months, not least the **ice rink** in the Castle Gardens which attracted skaters of all ages. The City's Christmas Parade culminated at the Castle, where lights on the Castleyard's Christmas tree, kindly donated by Knowles & Son, were switched on. With carol singers and **CaféFOOD's** mince pies the atmosphere was truly festive.

We hope to make Christmas at the Castle even more special this year, but before then plans for animating the Castleyard through the summer are taking shape. Following the launch of the Oxfordshire 2007 millennium festival in the Castleyard, our own project, 'Opening Doors Opening Minds', will also have the Castle as its hub with a medieval-themed day on 23 June (*see lead article*). The Oxford Folk Festival will again have the Castle as one of its venues, and we have more plans for St George's Day and May morning. **Creation Theatre**, following the success of *The Merchant of Venice* last year in the Castle Gardens, are coming back to Oxford Castle this summer. They will be performing *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Castleyard.

Oxford Preservation Trust Theatre Evening

Creation Theatre is giving a performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* for Oxford Preservation Trust on Thursday 26 July. We hope many of you will join us for this special evening to help raise funds. We will send you further details nearer the time, but do keep the date free.

The Castle project is attracting a lot of attention from professional bodies, with articles due to be published in two RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Land and Conservation publications. The scheme is one of three international projects on the shortlist for an **MIPIM Award** in the Hotel and Tourism category—results will be announced on 15 March—and it has been shortlisted for a **Civic Trust** award, to be announced on 20 March in Blackpool. The **RICS** assessors are due to visit the Castle in the coming weeks. We are working closely with other partners in the project to submit nominations and are confident that the

scheme's innovative approach will be recognised, so watch this space.

Mrs Dance gave a talk on the role of heritage in regeneration to delegates from around the world at a conference of the **British Council** in December, drawing on her previous experience at the Birmingham Conservation Trust as well as the example of Oxford Castle. This resulted in her hosting a visit to Oxford Castle by the Heritage Minister for **Western Australia** and the Chair of their National Trust, who have an interest in Freemantle Prison. Mrs Dance also received a visit from Dr Ryuta Ohashi of Tokyo Kasei-Gakuin University, showing just how far the work of the Trust at the Castle is reaching out.

PLANNING

The Examination in Public (EiP) into the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA)'s draft **South East Plan** began in earnest in Woking on 28 November. The EiP provides an opportunity for the discussion and testing, in public and before a Panel appointed by the Secretary of State, of matters that arose out of last year's consultation phase on the draft plan. The Trust submitted its written statement in January on 'Central Oxfordshire: Housing and Green Belt', arguing that there is no current need for a review of the Green Belt. We will support our case in person at Reading on 28 February.

The pressure for more **housing** and development in the South East continues to be felt at District level with Councils assessing options to 2026. Over the winter South Oxfordshire District Council launched their Site Allocations proposals document as did Cherwell District Council most recently for its Central Oxfordshire and Bicester sector. Within the City the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment site identification call closed just before Christmas. These requests for sites have engendered much interest from developers and landowners and concern from the public, however they represent calls for information only at this stage.

Mrs Dance continues to sit on the **Oxford Strategic Partnership**, which considers issues around tourism, public realm, affordable housing and climate change.

As a member of the **West End Steering Group**, Mrs Dance is involved in the public consultation on the West End Area Action Plan, in which many OPT members may have participated. Interest has recently focused on the future of the Worcester Street Car Park within this scheme, with key stakeholders agreeing that a more thorough assessment and understanding of the history of this area is an essential prerequisite to its future redevelopment.

The application by the Westgate Partnership to refurbish and extend the **Westgate Shopping Centre** went before the Strategic Development Control Committee in October, when the Trust's Director again highlighted the harm that the car park building, in particular, will do to the views from St George's Tower and the Mound. While there were a number of other objections, the application was approved. The Trust has resolved to work with the developers and the City Council 'on the ground' to try to ensure that the finished development is the very best for Oxford.

Both **Universities** continue to consult with the Trust on their plans for development and change, most recently on the extension to the Saïd Business School, plans for the Radcliffe Infirmary, St John's College, Lady Margaret Hall, and the Masterplan for Oxford Brookes at Headington and Wheatley. Plans for a University Library Depository, subject of a previously withdrawn application, will come forward shortly, modified but, seemingly, still to be located on the same site on **Osney Mead**, within an important view of the city. An application for an extension to the Newsquest Press Hall has just been approved in the same location, which was unexpected bad news.



Newsquest building— Photograph: Greg Smolonski/Photovibe

Among the **residential planning applications**, a concerning number have been for the demolition of attractive and significant houses, including those within conservation areas, which have generated much public protest. In North Oxford, an application for the demolition of 26 Lathbury Road, an 'Arts & Crafts' house by the architect Percy Morley-Horder, was refused permission before Christmas, and 1 Lucerne Road is on its third revised application at the time of writing. Across the city an application to demolish 190 Iffley Road, an attractive, little known example of the work of Frank Mountaine, was refused at the end of last year, as was that for the historic Coach & Horses Public House in St Clements.

The nearby **Warneford Meadow** outline development application has been subject to much public debate since Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Mental Healthcare Trust submitted their five applications last year. Many local people have objected to the proposed loss of this historic and much loved meadow for student and/or key worker accommodation and healthcare and/or medical research uses. It is to be hoped that the outcome will be appropriate for all local needs when it eventually goes before the Strategic Development Control Committee.

The City Council has continued its ambitious programme of **Conservation Area Appraisals**. This process will allow the city to fully understand the significance and value of its 16 Conservation Areas in order to inform decisions about their management and future change. This work progresses the work and conclusions of the *Oxford Landscape Character Assessment* and integrates with the local development plan framework. The Wolvercote and Godstow Conservation Area Appraisal is already in press, to be joined later this year by Bartlemas, Osney, North Oxford and St Clements and Iffley Road. The next round of area consultations is to begin shortly.

Research for the recent North Oxford Conservation Area appraisal will inform work on the **Railings Leaflet** which we are writing in conjunction with the City Council and which we hope to produce in the autumn.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

The 2006 Environmental Awards ceremony took place in early October to recognise the best amongst a record number of nominations. Six Plaques and ten Certificates were presented by Mr John Ashdown, Chairman of the Awards Panel and Trustee, and Trust Chairman Sir David Yardley. **Plaques** were awarded to the Church of St Birinus in Dorchester-on-Thames for restoration works, to the creation of the Cloisters Gallery at the Dorchester Abbey Museum, the reinstatement of cast iron railings at 9 Park Town, the new Reading Room at the First Church of Christ Scientist in St Giles, new accommodation and lodge at St Catherine's College, and to Sunnymead and Cuttleslowe Parks and Wetland. **Certificates** were awarded to the Clarendon Building, Goose Green, the Grand Jury Room, the Hedge along Hollow Way, 77 London Road, the New Bodleian Library, 68-70 Nowell Road, OVADA, St Margaret's Institute and St Michael at the Northgate. The brochure in this mailing gives full details of the winners and a list of the ten commendations.



2006 Environmental Awards—Photograph: Greg Smolonski/Photovibe

2007 Environmental Awards

We are now inviting nominations for 2007. A number of projects rewarded in 2006 had been nominated by Trust members, and we are keen to hear from you if you are aware of any environmental, building or restoration scheme which you think makes a positive contribution to Oxford or the Green Belt. We are particularly interested in hearing about smaller projects which may otherwise go unnoticed. For more information contact the office or visit our website.

TRUST NEWS

We are pleased to welcome as a **Trustee** City Councillor Tony Hollander, a figure well known to the Trust in his capacity as Chairman of the Central and North Area Planning Committee.

The Trust records, with thanks, a generous **legacy** from the estate of Mrs B Curgenvin in memory of her late husband John Parr Curgenvin and her late father-in-law Sir Arthur Curgenvin.

Over 120 delegates filled the lecture theatre at Rewley House on Saturday 3 February to hear the author of **'The Erosion of Oxford'** thirty years after the book's publication. Professor James Stevens Curl returned from Ireland to the city which, thirty years ago, he believed to be doomed. He shared his platform with Mark Barrington-Ward, President of the Civic Society and former editor of the Oxford Mail (*see planning lectures*), John Ashdown, former City Council Conservation Officer and Debbie Dance, Director of the Trust, who spoke engagingly and eloquently about the Castle and Oxford's positive future. As well as an occasion for thought and reflection, it was also a sad day as it was a final goodbye to Professor Malcolm Airs, who masterminded and ran the MSc in Historic Conservation in conjunction with Oxford Brookes University and has chaired many such courses over the years. We are delighted that he remains an OPT Trustee.

<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/NoVAToldBuildngs/>
Please add your name to the official petition to remove VAT on listed building repairs.

GRANTS

The Trustees continue to support a great diversity of projects with the Trust's programme of grant giving within the city centre and the Green Belt. The committee of the **Barracks Lane Community Garden Project** have now signed leases and raised sufficient funding to undertake the capital works and make the site accessible to the public. The Trustees have also enabled BBOWT to undertake their project at the **CS Lewis Nature Reserve** and we look forward to

visiting the site when work is completed. The **Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust** benefit from an annual grant from the Trustees and many of our members have enjoyed the wonderful tours of Oxfordshire's historic churches led by Richard Lethbridge. The Trust continues to support the **Oxfordshire Woodland Group**, who are now involved with more activity in the city, and grants have been awarded to the City Centre Management Company, **OX1**, and to the **Bonn Square** project. The Trust was keen to support Oxford City Council in this improvement of the public realm.

Applications for grants are welcome. Please visit our website for further details.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2006

The Trust offered a varied programme of events for Heritage Open Days in September. We are grateful to Mr John Ashdown, who led a group to the **Carfax Conduit** and the historic Well House in North Hinksey.



The Pollard Monument, All Saints Churchyard, Nuneham Courtenay, part of the Conduit walk—Photograph: Holly Kilpatrick

Both 26 and 26A **East St Helens Street** were opened to the public and the sunny weather brought a record number of visitors to view this rare example of medieval domestic life and enjoy the wonderful sculpture of the present tenant. Over fifty members enjoyed tours of the Tudor **Painted Room** hidden away in Cornmarket Street. Details of our 2007 tours of the Painted Room are in the programme card. It will be open on Saturday 23 June as part of 'Opening Doors Opening Minds' and for Heritage Open Days.

Mr David Mather, formerly of Network Rail and a keen railway enthusiast, treated an enthralled group to a presentation on the **LMS Swingbridge** followed by a leisurely guided walk to the site.



Swingbridge walk—Photograph: Gaelle Jolly

Heritage Open Days 2007 will take place from **Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 September**.

MEMBERSHIP

Since its opening, we have been delighted to enjoy the use of the Key Learning Centre for talks. The first of these took place on 2 September when, in **Betjeman's Centenary** year, Trustee John Ashdown treated us to a talk on aspects of the poet's life in Oxfordshire with John Piper. This coincided with other Oxford celebrations of Betjeman's life, including an exhibition in the New Bodleian, one of the exhibits being the Trust's Minute book containing the relevant period when Betjeman was Trust Secretary.

In November, Mr Ashdown repeated his excellent illustrated lecture on **'Oxford and its Setting'** for our membership evening. We thank the many members who introduced guests and warmly welcome the new members who joined the Trust on that occasion.

We hope that there is something for everyone in our **programme for 2007**. We are still offering our traditional mid-week outings and are delighted that Richard Lethbridge has once again offered June and September tours of Oxfordshire historic churches. For those of you who missed the tour of Oxford's Observatories last May, Geoffrey Tyack has kindly offered to repeat it. We are offering more early evening events as we are mindful that this suits the busy schedules of some of our members. Don't miss our walks with

John Ashdown, who will lead us around Seacourt Hill and Wytham on 5 June and the Cherwell Valley on 6 July ending with a drink in the Victoria Arms. In spite of his busy academic and writing schedule, William Whyte will be leading a tour of East Oxford encompassing the Mosque. We are also introducing a **new series of lectures** on planning themes at the Key Learning Centre, starting with a talk on plans for the Radcliffe Infirmary site in March. Other topics include the recent history of planning in Oxford, traffic issues, and community involvement in the planning process. See programme card for details.

The Key Learning Centre is an ideal venue for corporate events and meetings. It accommodates 60 seating or 100 standing, and is fully equipped with state-of-the-art audio-visual facilities. Catering and tours of Unlocked are also available.



For more information, contact Becky Ruston on 08702 411414.

The Key—Photograph: Charlotte Wood

Our **AGM** will be held at Maison Française, Norham Road, on Thursday 5 July. The speaker will be Peter Pearce, Director of the **Landmark Trust**, whose excellent work many members may have experienced first-hand.

We have noticed that some members who are paying by Direct Debit are still paying their **subscriptions** at the old rates. Our current rates are Individual £15, Household £20. Although we will write individually this year, it would help us and reduce costs considerably if members could check their bank statements and arrange to pay any amount outstanding. May we also remind members of the opportunities for tax efficient giving to the Trust. The simplest way is for tax paying members to sign a **Gift Aid** declaration allowing us to claim back 28p in every pound you donate. The Trust can also accept **donations** through Payroll Giving, Share Donations or through legacies. Please contact the office if any of these options would be of interest to you.