

## CAN OXFORD LEAD AS WELL AS INSPIRE ?

by Robert Hutchison

Chief Executive, Oxford Inspires

Members of Oxford Civic Society provided considerable help with Oxford's bid last year to become European Capital of Culture 2008. *Oxford Inspires* was originally set up to lead the work on that bid. But it also has a more profound purpose: to encourage greater collaboration between Oxford's two universities and Oxfordshire's six principal local authorities – as well as the numerous cultural organisations throughout the County – so that, in the course of a few years, there will be clear social, cultural and economic benefits for everyone who lives here.

Now in its second year, *Oxford Inspires* is setting itself both short- and medium-term goals. A major aim is to help develop festival culture throughout the County and, in particular, to organise and facilitate a great international cultural festival in 2007. '*Oxfordshire International 2007*' – the working title of the festival – will draw upon Oxfordshire's many cultural strengths and seek to involve everyone in the County in enjoyable sporting, scientific, artistic and other recreational activities. It will be a year-long countywide festival characterised by celebration, enlightenment and challenge; innovation, participation and internationalism will be the golden threads running through the programme. Before then *Oxford Inspires* intends to initiate and co-ordinate a programme of cultural events in 2005 to mark the UK's Presidency of the European Union in the second half of next year.



Culture is the key to successful and high quality tourism. The development of festival culture needs to be accompanied by considerable improvements in tourism management and marketing. This was one of the main conclusions of a conference – held on 27 February and organised by *Oxford Inspires* – designed to take forward a much-needed debate about the future of tourism in the City and the County.

*Oxford Inspires'* ambitious plans for developing festival culture run in tandem with the practical collaborations between thinkers and doers that we are helping to forge. Our overall aim is for the City and County of Oxford to become – and be recognised as – national and international leaders, not just in learning, but in many other areas of cultural and environmental activity, from arts opportunities for young people to the practical applications of solar energy, from public engagement with science to outstanding urban design.

The challenge is great.

With offices in the Said Business School, *Oxford Inspires* is seeking to build up a small team of volunteers to work on a variety of tasks including organising meetings, research and information gathering, and helping to promote the organisation.

If you are able to contribute an average of at least 4 hours per week please send a short CV and covering letter to Liz Gresham, Administrative Manager, *Oxford Inspires*, Said Business School, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP; or e mail [liz.gresham@sbs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:liz.gresham@sbs.ox.ac.uk)

## Planning Report

News about applications mentioned in our last News-letter, No. 96 (November 2003):-

Applications to demolish were passed for **1A Staverton Road** (to be replaced by a block of 6 flats), for the stable block of **304 Woodstock Road**, (to be replaced by a single-storey house, screened by the wall in Middle Way), and for **29 Squitchey Lane** (to be replaced by three 4- to 5-bed houses leaving only a tiny space for gardens). At **10 Cinnaminta Road, Lye Valley**, a proposal to put up 2 buildings for 8 flats was refused by Cowley Area but finally passed by the Statagic Development Control Committee. Refusals came for **61 Old Road** (to demolish some garages and build a block of 12 flats) and also for increased parking capacity in the area behind **58 to 62 St Aldates**. In Jericho the two large developments, one by **St Barnabas Church** and the other replacing the **Eagle Iron Works**, are still under debate, with small amendments. A proposal to build two houses behind **24 Juxon Street** has been reduced to one 3-bed house and is still not decided.

In *October*, a proposal to convert **277 Iffley Road** from a guest-house to 8 flats was refused. In *November*, a 2-storey side extension for 4 flats was proposed for **28 Burchester Avenue** and permitted in December. In **Green Street**, application was made for the **Bindery and Number 9** to be demolished and redeveloped for student or residential accommodation: this was refused in January, probably to try to conserve employment opportunity. The **Royal British Legion in Hadow Road**, off Headley Way, proposed to use much of the car park area for a new and larger Club House, but this is still undecided.

*December* brought plans for a 3- and 4-storey building for the East Oxford Health Centre at **Manzil Way, Cowley** and these were passed in February. One proposal still undecided is to demolish **Number 78 and 1-4 Sunset Cottages, St Clements Street** and replace with 18 flats on 4 storeys with four 2-storey buildings behind. Another is at **Mansfield College** for 24 student rooms in a 4-floor building.

In *January*, it was proposed to open up the narrow space between the **Debtors' Tower and D-Wing of the Prison** for a footpath for visitors, under a small glazed building inserted at first floor level, and this is likely to be permitted. Decisions are awaited for two other interesting January applications – a large housing development on the **Rivermead Rehabilitation Centre, Abingdon Road**, and modernization of **Blackhall Farmhouse in Charlbury Road**.

Four highlights in *February* which still await decisions were proposals: to convert and extend the ruins of **Osney Mill, Mill Street**, (creating 8 flats and a house); to

demolish the **Plasterers' Arms PH at 9 Marston Road** (to make way for a 3- and 4-storey block of 18 flats); to re-roof the **Carfax Gardens Café** and to put up a sign board on the **Iffley Road Oxford University Sports Ground** to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first "sub-four-minute-mile".

*Mark Barrington-Ward, Kate Miller,  
Chris Rayson, David Townsend*

## Transport Notes

Firstly, two lots of congratulations – to Oxfordshire County Council for being rated among the top ten Transport Authorities in the country by a Government review and to the County again, along with Oxford City Council and the Oxford Bus Company, for gaining second place in the 2004 British Parking Awards for the Park & Ride system. Well done to all concerned.

Recent changes to bus services in the city include Stagecoach's attempt to improve the timekeeping of the No 7 route by terminating alternate buses in the city centre, instead of them all running through between Kidlington and Barton. If you want to travel through the centre you will need to catch a plain No 7; 7A and 7B will serve Kidlington and the centre; and 7C Barton/Headington and the centre. Or, of course, use a No 2! The other change in the city is the re-routing of Oxford Bus Company's No 16 along Iffley Road and High Street, instead of Donnington Bridge and Abingdon Road. This greatly inconveniences Weirs Lane and Donnington Bridge Road residents, while people living along the Abingdon Road will need two buses to get to Cowley instead of one. It remains to be seen whether or not the OBC will bow to the considerable opposition to this change.

The other news affecting buses is the decision by the City Council to seek powers to fine bus drivers who leave their engines running for more than a few minutes when stationary in the city centre. Both main bus companies have welcomed this move to reduce pollution but it should be extended to all vehicles with engines running unnecessarily.

Jericho is in the news with a possible 20 mph zone being declared there and a new cycle and pedestrian route from Walton Well Road to the railway station through the new University housing development planned for next year.

**Finally, the City Council has published a guide to Oxford specifically for people in wheelchairs and with other mobility problems. Called the 'Oxford Accessible Guide', it is available free of charge from the Tourist Information Centre in Broad Street and Council offices.**

*David Townsend*

### **“Visions For Oxford in the 21st Century”**

The Society’s groundbreaking study of Oxford’s problems and opportunities is still available to any members who have not yet bought their copy. It is a collection of thought provoking articles from 35 contributors looking at wider aspects of the city, such as education, recreation and community, providing better design and giving forecasts on population and transport. We hope that the ideas and visions, all interesting, some surprising, may prove useful as well as stimulating and enjoyable.

***It is available at meetings for £12, or at £14 each (incl p&p) by order from Oxford Civic Society, 21 Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HQ – cheques payable to Oxford Civic Society.***

*Genefer Clark*

### **A Brief Comment on “Visions ..”**

The Civic Society’s book on *Visions for Oxford* makes interesting reading. Paul Langford is right to find the re-invention of the city’s ancient centre an alluring prospect; but Anthony Smith equally rightly puts his finger on the intermingling of populations that is now taking place; whilst Edmund Gray outlines many ways in which the city as a whole could, and should, be improved.

The Visions do not, however, seriously address the need to re-emphasise the concept of Oxford as “one city”. Indeed, the concentration of so much in the small area defined by the medieval city could call this into question – and exacerbate transport problems. This is why the notion of a Thames-side concert hall and conference centre within a linear park stretching between the two Universities, from Iffley to Marston, is so attractive. It would provide wonderful civic facilities, open to all, and become a symbol of the extended accumulation of academic, scientific, medical, commercial, business and leisure facilities that Oxford has become.

*Alan Russell*

### **The BBC Under Threat**

The BBC operates under a renewable charter to run public broadcasting in this country; this, together with the financing of the BBC, is currently under review. Far from a ‘rubber stamping exercise’ to allow Auntie to go on broadcasting what we know and love, this review threatens significant change. A long-held view prevails that the licence fee is unfair, forcing all those who never listen to or watch BBC programmes to pay for something they don’t want. Hence, the whole system may be drastically altered. The aftermath of the Hutton report has further exacerbated this threat.

If the BBC is forced to ‘go commercial’, this will have a devastating impact on the quality of broadcast material in general. The BBC sets a high standard, forcing commercial stations and others to compete in order to attract an audience. Any lowering of standards by the BBC will produce more and more “junk” on television and radio.

As someone who grew up with BBC Radio and finds life unbearable without it, I hope we can put pressure on the government to enable the BBC to maintain its unique position as the benchmark for others in the industry. I cannot imagine hearing on any commercial station what I relish on Radio 4!

*There are various ways to make your voice heard:- write to your MP; respond by the deadline of 31 March to the ongoing consultation via <http://www.bbccharterreview.org.uk/> OR write setting out how you value the BBC, to – BBC Charter Review Consultation, Dept for Culture, Media & Sport, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London, SW1Y 5DH.*

*Also, consider joining “The Voice of the Listener & Viewer”, (a body which “represents the citizen and consumer interests in broadcasting”); contact them at 101 Kings’ Drive, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5BQ or [www.vlv.org.uk](http://www.vlv.org.uk)*

*Rosamund Weatherall*

### **Walking – Poor Relation of OTS?**

All who walk in Oxford, and not just in the centre, know the poor state of the environment they use – poor surfaces, narrow pavements, bad drainage, ill-sited crossings, amongst other problems.

Hordes of people journey on foot; indeed, walking allows huge crowds to use small spaces – picture Cornmarket. Sometimes spaces are too small, while other areas encourage vehicles and pedestrians in open (and all too intimidating) competition – Queen Street and Bonn Square, for example.

Walking enables the centre and the districts of Oxford to flourish; it offers the walker independence, mobility, healthy exercise and an opportunity for wide ranging activity – at no expense.

Yet, sadly, walking is under-rated and misunderstood. For it is the role of the public space that is paramount to the issues that arise. Very many agencies play their part in the provision and maintenance of those spaces, which may not be public highways – bus and rail stations, parks and hospitals for instance.

More than a transport strategy, there is an urgent need for integrated strategies governing the use and management of public spaces. That integration simply must engage the “end users”.

*Paul Cullen*

### **Black Poplars for the River Bank**

On Wednesday 10 December, a small group including 7 Civic Society members shivered on the banks of the Thames, near Godstow Lock, for the official planting of replacement Black Poplars donated by Oxford Civic Society.

At the official moment, the spade was wielded by Father Gerard Hughes, Master of Campion Hall and photographed by *The Oxford Times*. Our thanks to Anthony Roberts, Senior Countryside Ranger, who organized the event and whose team planted the other five trees. Thank you, too, to all those members of the Civic Society who donated money for the purchase of the Poplars and to Genefer Clark who kindly provided mulled wine, coffee and mince pies.

*Wendy A Reid*

### **How Do You Feel about Your Locality?**

The *Oxford People & Places Programme* is ENCAMS (Tidy Britain Group) systematic and long-term community based programme for solving the problem of litter, graffiti, and vandalism and improving our environment. Its success lies in the established link between the **people** that cause litter and other problems and the **places** that suffer the effects.

This important initiative is now in its eighth year and has had many successes, thanks to a wide team of local volunteers who take part in environmental improvements and clean-up campaigns.

For information/advice on local projects, telephone Malcolm Hart, *People&Places Programme Manager*, 01865 252914; email [mhart@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:mhart@oxford.gov.uk); or write to Oxford City Council Cleansing Services, Marsh Road, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2HH.

### **Reduce, Re-use, Recycle – Don't Landfill**

An A5 pack is available on request to all Oxford residents to encourage greater support of the 3R's – *Reduce, Re-use and Recycle*. There are tips on various ways of reducing the footprint on our environment (from junk mail to discarded old furniture) and a voucher for two free, cream-coloured calico shopping bags, (designed by local students), in a bid to reduce the everyday usage of plastic carrier bags and their impact on landfill sites.

Phone the Waste Reduction Hotline, 01865 816070 or email [waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:waste.management@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **An Invitation to Visit Greenwich**

The *Oxford & District Organists' Association* plans a coach trip to Greenwich on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June and cordially invites members of the Oxford Civic Society to travel with them and, indeed, to join them in their interesting schedule for the day – depart 9 am, return around 8 pm, approx cost £18 per person.

For further details, please contact John Brennan on 01865 243220, or [John.F.Brennan@btinternet.com](mailto:John.F.Brennan@btinternet.com)

### **Our New Look Newsletter**

Over the last few months, members of the Committee have given much thought and careful attention to this new design of our Newsletter. We very much hope that you will have found it attractive in appearance, as well as concise and easy to read.

We would welcome your comments, addressed to one of the Committee members listed below:-

---

**Newsletter issued in March, July and November and published by  
Oxford Civic Society, PO Box 149, Oxford OX2 7ZX (556391)**

**[www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk](http://www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk)**

**Chairman** Tony Joyce, 30 Latimer Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7PF (764027)

**Editor** Pauline Martin, 112 Bridge Street, Osney Island, Oxford OX2 0DH (250870)

**Membership Secretary** Julia Carlisle, 12 Southdale Road, Oxford OX2 8DQ (556391)

**Planning Secretary** Kate Miller, 68 Blenheim Drive, Oxford OX2 8DQ (556050)

**Programme Secretary** Sheila Glazebrook, 116 Woodstock Rd, OX2 7NF (310488)

**Printed by Will Print, 1 Newtec Place, 66-72 Magdalen Road, Oxford**