

The struggle goes on!

By Ian Green, Chairman

This spring marks the start of a year of special events to celebrate our Golden Jubilee. How did it all begin and how has the Society changed in those decades?

On 21 October 1969 a letter in the *Oxford Mail* suggested that a new society was needed in Oxford. The letter explained that “while other societies and groups exist, there seems to be no body as yet which has as its first consideration the quality of the townscape around us, in Oxford”. The letter was written by the Civic Society’s founder members and it went on to outline what the new Society should be about. This included:

- To encourage the citizens of Oxford to express their views on their city and to have these views taken notice of instead of the usual breakdown in communications between local government and people.
- To carry the opinions of the citizens on town planning and other matters concerning the physical environment to the authorities and to make sure these opinions are noted.
- To conserve the best in our environment and to make sure it is not eroded by the juggernaut of impersonal piecemeal local government planning whether by highway considerations or any other.
- To ensure that new developments are suited to the needs of people and not to administrative convenience.
- To ensure that new developments are suited to the needs of people and not to the purely selfish motives of commercial developers who reap their rewards while causing the community as a whole untold damage in terms of increased traffic and other detrimental factors.
- To ensure that Oxford may once again be a fine place in which to live, not only for the present generations, but for future ones as well.

The letter went on to say that “many of us are very dissatisfied with planning, with new buildings, with road policies, with car parking policies, with the bus station, with the railway station, with the lack of amenities for visitors and residents, and with the methods of communication between the local authority and the public”.

The struggle goes on. Although the relationship between



Campaigning 1970 style. Gerard Turner (right) and other committee members delivered a petition signed by over 3,000 people arguing that proposed road-building schemes would destroy much of the city and merely pull in more traffic. Does this sound familiar?!

Photo courtesy of the Oxford Mail

citizens and public authorities is much healthier today than in 1969, this litany is remarkably similar to one which we might make today. We have made some gains but there still many constraints to achieving efficient, effective and sustainable development in Oxford, Central Oxfordshire and the county as a whole.

OCS@50 debates starting soon!

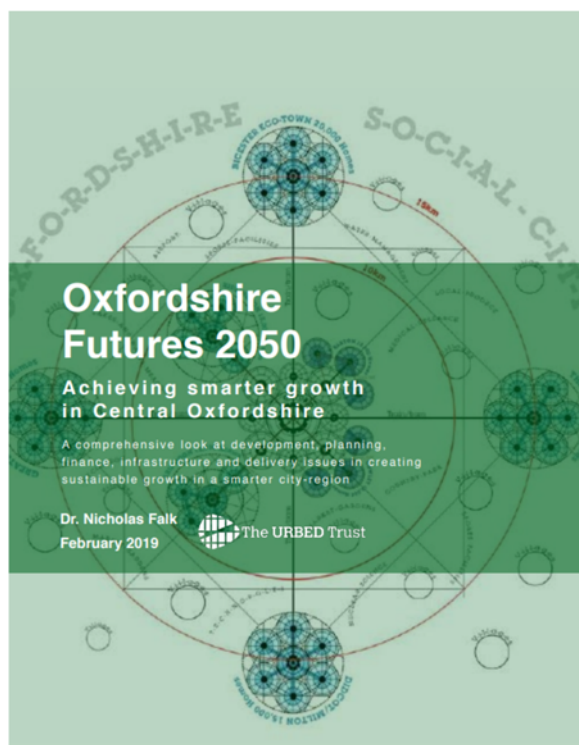
Don't miss this opportunity to debate the big issues - see page 3 for more information.

Another letter in the *Oxford Mail* in October 1969 exclaimed “what we need are watchdogs” and proposals were put forward for the Society to “*act as a general watchdog ... sniffing out undesirable changes before they are made and barking the alarm, and working for the removal of existing blemishes*”.

Now, 50 years on the Society is still ‘barking the alarm’. Our concerns about Oxford and its region include those of our pioneer founders but have also broadened in scope and reach. In particular we are now also concerned with the social and environmental dimensions of development planning and management of the city and the city region and governance.

Shaping the agenda – Oxfordshire 2050

For example, we recently commissioned a report giving our views on key topics that underpin the **Oxfordshire 2050 Plan** (the new name for the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan). We have now submitted the *Oxfordshire Futures 2050** report to the Oxfordshire Growth Board and the councillors responsible for managing the preparation of the plan. Our study is very much an attempt to sniff out undesirable changes before they are made and barking the alarm. It also exemplifies collaborative working rather than the petitions of our



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early years. The report aims to encourage strategic planning in the city and city-region which more effectively links employment, housing and transport and makes best use of spare capacity on local rail lines in Central Oxfordshire.

A year of debate and special events

As befits a landmark year, we have a new logo and colours and a special programme of events to inform, challenge and inspire you. These include **two talks, three debates and six walks/visits** in our spring/early summer programme alone. The debates make good our remit to ‘give citizens a voice’ and we hope local government will take note! We are delighted that so many eminent speakers have agreed to debate the hottest issues in Oxfordshire – the Green Belt, growth and the Expressway, and curbing pollution. Details are shown on page 3. My thanks go to the Programme Group and especially Clive Booth for all their hard work in bringing this together.

We are also delighted to be launching a **history of the Society's first 50 years** written by local historian **Liz Woolley**, freely available online (from April). She will summarise her assessment of our achievements at the **pre-AGM talk on 2 April**. A brochure based on her work will be available at our AGM and meetings (see page 3 for more details).

So, just as in 1969, the Society aims to give a voice to all those who want to **do** something but do not know how, or feel it is a waste of time. The call in 1969 was that “*we could have the power to order our environment. Let us make sure we use it*”. **Our call in 2019 is that we have proved that we have the power – help us to use it.**

Please enable the Society to continue its work for another 50 years – encourage your friends and neighbours to join us. If you want to help to shape Oxford's future why not join one of our active and effective working groups.

Ian Green
Chairman

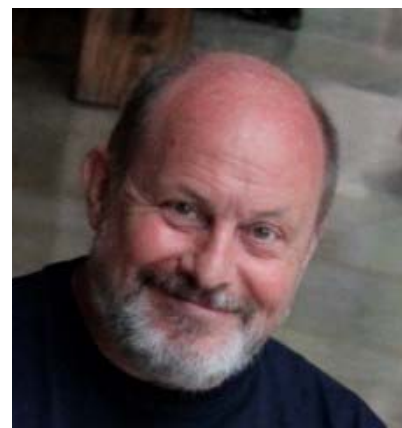
* *Oxfordshire Futures 2050: Achieving smarter growth in Central Oxfordshire* is available here:

www.oxfordfutures.org.uk/OF2050

For details of our working groups see the website

www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/ or contact us at:

info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk



OCS@50 debates – giving you a voice!

Clive Booth, President

To mark our 50th anniversary year we are holding public debates on three of the most contested topics in our city-region.

The Society's aim has always been to give citizens a voice on issues relating to the city's future – and Oxford and its city-region face the kinds of challenges not seen since the 1960s and 70s. We have focused on three issues to bring you an opportunity to hear from experts and passionate advocates and to add your voice to the discussion. Please join us for what promise to be very thought-provoking evenings.

Note: we expect the debates to be very popular and for that reason are asking people to **book a place**.

Where are the debates happening?

The **Assembly Room, Oxford Town Hall, St Aldates**. There is disabled access via a separate entrance on St Aldates.

Is there a charge for tickets?

We are making a modest charge of £7 per ticket to cover the venue and other costs.

How do we book tickets?

Tickets should be booked online via Eventbrite www.eventbrite.co.uk/. (Search by the title or use a direct link to the Eventbrite page from our website ([Programme page](#)) once booking opens.)

If you can't use the Internet please order tickets by phone from Alan Hobbs (members only; details on page 6).

Can anyone attend?

Yes, these are open to all so please bring your friends.

The battle for the Green Belt. Should we prioritise the Green Belt or new homes for Oxford?

Thursday 11 April at 7.30pm

Bob Price, former leader of Oxford City Council, will argue that the release of Green Belt land to meet housing need can benefit the common good without undermining the enduring purposes of the Green Belt. His view will be contested by **Mike Tyce** from CPRE.

Cutting pollution in Oxford: alternative proposals

Thursday 16 May at 7.30pm

When should central Oxford become a Zero Emission Zone (ZEE) and what about pollution in the rest of the city? How should the various ways of reducing pollution be combined? Councillor **Paul Harris**, who drew public attention to the problems of introducing a ZEE as early as 2020, and **Chris Church** from Friends of the Earth, will offer their alternative proposals.

Should Oxfordshire grow? The proposed Expressway and new communities

Monday 17 June at 7.30pm

Government proposals for significant growth in Oxfordshire in coming decades include an Expressway and several new communities. Are these needed or should growth be directed elsewhere? Can growth be 'intelligent', leading to prosperity without compromising the quality of life? Councillor **Ian Hudspeth**, leader of Oxfordshire County Council and **Danny Dorling**, Halford Mackinder Professor of Geography, will contest the issues.

OCS at 50 – a very special AGM!

We look forward to welcoming you at the 50th AGM where a talk, a book launch and a pay bar await you!

We are delighted that local historian **Liz Woolley** is to be our pre-AGM speaker, talking about **OCS at 50: half a century of changing Oxford**.

We recently commissioned Liz to write a history of the Society's work since our inception in 1969 in the context of a changing city. Hear her assessment of our history, join us for drinks in the pay bar afterwards and pick up a copy of the special anniversary brochure.

Date: Tuesday 2 April at 7pm (talk) for AGM at 8pm

Venue: Rewley House (note new venue)
1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA

See the back page for the agenda.

The illustrated anniversary brochure *Changing Oxford* gives a potted history of the Society's 50 years. It covers our major achievements and pays tribute to the pioneers that made it all possible. You can pick up a copy at our debates and talks or by post after 2 April:

Liz Grosvenor, 15 Lime Walk,
Oxford OX3 7AB
Suggested donation £5
including p & p.

Please send a cheque payable to Oxford Civic Society.

Liz's full report on our history can be freely downloaded from our website from 2 April.



Making connections

Margaret Maden, Vice President

How do we engage young people in Oxford's future? Margaret Maden is leading an innovative new project.

Blackbird Leys is and isn't in Oxford. Yes, it's within the city boundaries but for many young people there, the 'City of Dreaming Spires' is indeed a dream and is quite alien. Some 17-year olds recently made it clear that they had never visited the city centre.

The Society has always been concerned with making Oxford a good place to live and work in; a place where all age and income groups can flourish. We regularly engage with workplaces which are concerned with conservation and heritage. We believe that young people, probably ages 16 -19, would benefit from closer involvement with such workplaces in the form of a two-week work experience placement.

Hence, our *Youth Heritage Project*. With The Oxford Academy, based in Blackbird Leys, and with essential financial support from The Hamilton Trust, the Society is making good progress with a number of employers including Beard

Construction, Kinglerlee Builders, Oxford Brookes University, the City Council's Museum of Oxford and the County Council's Register Office. In July, this wide range of organisations will each introduce a 17-year-old student to their specialist role in contributing to Oxford's heritage and conservation as well as life in a workplace away from home and school.

We hope this might galvanise the young person to pursue a career in an aspect of conservation and heritage. At the very least, they will be more fully educated, socially as well as vocationally. Each student will report back to a meeting of Academy staff, employers, Mike O'Regan (Chair of The Hamilton Trust) and Civic Society executive members. A short presentation is also a positive experience for the student; what was good, less good, a surprise, what do I now know that I didn't previously?

Employers – any further offers of placements in Oxford? The Oxford Spires Academy, Cowley, is also interested in being part of this project.

Remaking the Museum of Oxford

The Museum is currently closed to the public but work is underway to relaunch it. The Society is pleased to support this project. Tony Joyce updates us.

Having decided to proceed with the development of the new museum, the Museum Development Trust needs to continue its fundraising campaign, both to complete the current work and provide continuing support for future projects.

The new museum will have more space for exhibits, better access for people with disabilities, more scope to extend its outreach work to all parts of the city and its educational work with local schools.

At present the work of clearing the space, negotiating the future of significant exhibits and detailed structural planning is proceeding steadily. Major structural work should begin soon with the aim of opening the new museum before the end of 2020.

Ian Green presents the Society's contribution of £2,500 to the Chair of the Museum's Development Trust, Councillor Christine Simm



Expect delays on our transport

Andrew Pritchard, Transport Group

Transport Group members await information on a number of key issues ...

... including: the City Council's study to reduce traffic in the city centre and the adoption of Zero Emission Zones; detailed proposals for the Cowley branch line; the cost of expanding the rail station on the existing site and improvements to Botley Road bridge; possible implementation of the Phil Jones report on *Transport and the Public Realm in the City Centre*; the Rail Connectivity study; and the selection of a developer for the Central West Oxford site by Nuffield College and the City.

We have continued to hold meetings with representatives of the City and County, but have been disappointed in the apparent lack of progress. With the onset of some local elections, during which no decisions can be expected for political reasons, it will be summer before we know more. It seems unlikely that such information will be available in time to inform the initial version of the JSSP (Joint Statutory Spatial Plan, now re-christened Oxfordshire 2050), expected later in the year.

The next big plan

However, we know that a successor to the County's Local Transport Plan 4, referred to as LTP5, is now being worked on, but without any firm date for completion. We have held discussions with the University's Transport Studies Unit, with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr David Prout, and its Sustainable Transport

Officer to see if they would be willing to fund an analysis of travel and transport to inform decisions for later versions of the JSSP. We have been encouraged by their initial responses. They would also consider contributing towards our suggestion of extending the appointment of the County's officer who is working on a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. His work covers Bicester, Didcot and Oxford, and aims to help design infrastructure to encourage active travel. It is therefore depressing that the engineers designing the A40 and B4044 cycling routes appear to be giving precedence to cars at junctions.

We learned that the University is considering setting up a freight consolidation centre to help reduce the number of vehicles in central Oxford. They are also analysing the ownership and use of sites in the city centre and the implications for tourism. We urged them to work more closely with the City and County on transport and other planning matters, to benefit all parties.

The University's science shuttle buses – will these be going public soon?



The Expressway – your letters

Clare Farley writes:

I feel very strongly that the raison d'être of the planned Oxford to Cambridge Expressway needs to be questioned before consultation and planning get underway. It seems this idea has been "dropped on the region" by the Government and while the authorities are "going along with the idea", residents have a lot of questions about why we need it, if we need it at all. The evidence for the demand for another major road is lacking, particularly in light of the coming East-West railway link. It is generally accepted that building more roads creates more traffic, which isn't a good thing.

For many years I often drove to Cambridge on business. It was always a time-consuming drive with few stretches of dual carriageway. I'd have given anything to have travelled comfortably on a train, able to work while I did so.

More recently, I have driven from Oxford to Cambridge and back, several times, via several routes, and found there are already perfectly good (mainly dual-carriageway) routes. The northerly route via Northampton and the slightly shorter southerly route via Milton Keynes have about eight miles and 21

miles respectively which aren't dual-carriageway. Both journeys take about two hours. On none of these journeys was there much traffic in either direction. This makes me wonder about the alleged demand for an Expressway.

If these routes were improved to dual-carriageway, what need is there for an additional road? The direct train line will probably achieve the journey in half the time and mean that business people and students can work on the train. If the road is going to attract lots of housing developments, who wants to live alongside a polluting road? It will be much better to concentrate on building the train line with integrated transport – buses, cycle and walking routes – linking housing with railway stations which is much less polluting.

I feel we don't need the Expressway. Please let us question the Government and see evidence for the need for this road before they start consultations on the route.

Come and hear the case for and against the Expressway at our debate on 17 June. Full details on page 3.

Booking form

Spring / summer 2019 ticketed events

Closing date for applications: **Thursday 4 April**. Please enclose:

- 1 cheque/s payable to Oxford Civic Society, one for each event
- 2 one stamped, addressed envelope for all tickets

Member's name.....

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

2nd member's name (if applicable).....

Address.....

Postcode Telephone

Email

Event	No. of tickets	Amount enclosed	Rank 😊
<i>Please see page 3 for the booking arrangements for the three debates</i>			
Historic Wantage - a walk Thursday 16 May at 10am Thursday 23 May at 2pm <i>Please circle your preferred date and cross off any you can't do at all</i> @£5		
Oxford's water boundaries - a walk Monday 3 June at 2pm @£5		
Littlemore - a village walk Thursday 6 June at 2pm @£5		
Chilswell Valley Nature Reserve - a walk Thursday 13 June at 2.30pm Please indicate whether you: need a lift / can offer a lift (<i>please circle</i>)@£8		
Newman College - a visit Tuesday 2 July at 2.15pm@£8		
Oxford Science Park - a visit Wednesday 10 July at 10.30am@£8		
😊 Events are sometimes oversubscribed. If you rank your choices in order			

Note: Tickets are allocated soon after the closing date but if you miss it, it's always worth asking if there are places left. Cheques are banked three weeks after ticket issue; after that no refunds can be given.

Send this completed form to:

Alan Hobbs, 66 Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1PA

If you have booked but can't attend, please contact Alan Hobbs, tel: 01865 248 105. We always have a waiting list.

OCS Calendar

'Cut out and keep'

April – July 2019

**ticketed events*

- Tuesday 2 April** 7pm
OCS at 50: half a century of changing Oxford, a talk by Liz Woolley
Rewley House - note new venue
This is followed by the AGM at 8pm
- Monday 8 April*** 2pm
Oxford's ancient water boundaries, a walk. *This is fully subscribed*
- Thursday 11 April** 7.30pm
Debate: The battle for the Green Belt*
Oxford Town Hall
- Wednesday 17 April** 8pm
Ghosts, science and ghost hunters: a history, a talk by Allan Chapman
Magdalen College Auditorium
- Thursday 16 May** 7.30pm
Debate: Cutting pollution*
Oxford Town Hall
- Thursday 16 May** 10am
Thursday 23 May 2pm
Historic Wantage* - a walk
- Monday 3 June** 2pm
Oxford's ancient water boundaries*, a second walk led by Mark Davies
- Thursday 6 June** 2pm
Littlemore*, a village walk led by Sue Stewart
- Thursday 13 June** 2.30pm
Chilswell Valley Nature Reserve*, a walk
- Monday 17 June** 7.30pm
Debate: Growth and the Expressway*
Oxford Town Hall
- Tuesday 2 July** 2.15pm
Newman College, Littlemore*, a visit
- Wednesday 10 July** 10.30am
Oxford Science Park*, a visit led by Piers Scrimshaw-Wright



OCS@50 programme

April – July 2019

Open talks – all welcome

No pre - booking, free of charge (except the debate series)– help us to recruit new members by bringing a guest

OCS at 50: half a century of changing Oxford

Tuesday 2 April 7pm, AGM at 8pm
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, OX1 2JA

How has Oxford changed in the 50 years since the Society was set up and what role has the Society played in influencing those changes? Recently we commissioned local historian **Liz Woolley** to investigate. Tonight she reveals her assessment of our first 50 years. *An illustrated booklet will be available for sale.* The AGM will follow her talk after which please join us for drinks in the pay bar.

OCS@50 debates: The battle for the Green Belt. Should we prioritise the Green Belt or new homes?

Thursday 11 April at 7.30pm: details on page 3

Ghosts, science and ghost hunters: a history

Wednesday 17 April, 8pm
Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

The 'scientific' study of ghosts from the 17th century onwards was followed by 'scientific' ghost-hunting in Victorian times. Historian **Dr Allan Chapman** of Wadham College lifts the lid on a fascinating application of science. What do scientists, theologians and the public think about ghosts today?

OCS@50 debates: Cutting pollution in Oxford

Thursday 16 May at 7.30pm: details on page 3

OCS@50 debates: Should Oxfordshire grow? The proposed Expressway and new communities

Monday 17 June at 7.30pm: details on page 3

Members-only walks and visits

Tickets are needed for these events: bookings by Thursday 4 April

Historic Wantage – a walk

Thursday 16 May 10am
Thursday 23 May 2pm

Wantage, the birthplace of King Alfred, is a charming market town with many historic buildings. This one-hour walking tour will take in the parish church, market square and other landmarks. It's worth lingering to see the fascinating Vale and Downland Museum where there is also a convenient café.

Oxford's ancient water boundaries – a walk

Monday 3 June 2pm

The outer bounds of the City of Oxford were defined on three sides by its waterways. In the second of a series of walks led by local historian **Mark Davies** we will explore the western boundaries, taking in the Thames and the canal.

Littlemore – a village walk

Thursday 6 June 2pm

This one-hour walk led by **Sue Stewart** will take in the buildings associated with Cardinal Newman who founded the church of St Mary and St Nicholas. The tour ends with tea at the church where there is a small exhibition. *See also the Newman College visit.*

Chilswell Valley Nature Reserve – a walk

Thursday 13 June 2.30pm

The Chilswell Valley near South Hinksey is a rare and beautiful example of acid grassland, noted for its wild orchids, reed beds and old gnarled oaks. This walk will take about an hour; strong footwear is advised.

Newman College, Littlemore – a visit

Tuesday 2 July 2.15pm

A small Catholic community, the college was founded by Newman when he was the local vicar. This one and a half hour visit to the college, led by one of the sisters, will take in the chapel, library and a museum in Newman's room.

Oxford Science Park – a visit

Wednesday 10 July 10.30am

Over 70 companies and 2,500 people are now based in this 75-acre landscaped park. This tour of the new buildings, led by Piers Scrimshaw-Wright, will show how owners Magdalen College are developing the site in a sustainable and socially responsible way.

All welcome at the 50th AGM!

Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary

Our 50th AGM will kick off a year of celebration of this important milestone. Read on for all the details ...

Date: Tuesday 2 April at 7pm (talk) for AGM at 8pm

Venue: Rewley House

1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA

Join us for drinks in the pay bar after the AGM.

Our pre-AGM speaker is local historian **Liz Woolley** – read about her talk on page 3.

Please bring this agenda with you along with the Annual Review of 2018 which was mailed with this newsletter. The Review is our report to members.

Agenda

- 1 President's welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of AGM held on 21 March 2018
- 4 Matters arising from the minutes
- 5 Chairman's report
- 6 Treasurer's report and accounts for 2018
- 7 Vote of thanks to retiring Officers and Trustees
- 8 Election of Officers for 2019-20
- 9 Election of Committee Members for 2019-20
- 10 Discussion on subscription levels
- 11 Any other business of which notice has been given.

Copies of the minutes of the 2018 AGM and the accounts for 2018 are available on the website or from:

Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary,
67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ
email: info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

Subscription levels

This summer your Executive Committee will look at the case for increasing subscription rates. They have been at £10 for individuals and £14 joint since 2006. Over most of the intervening years we've been lucky enough to add to our reserves. In 2018 we drew on those reserves to prepare for our 50th anniversary and there will be further drawings during our 50th year. After this, we hope the Society will be growing in strength and activity.

Why do we need to boost our funds now? As the Society gets more active we may need to engage some paid admin support. We need to support our working groups, e.g. by paying for properly-equipped meeting rooms and paying conference attendance fees. With Local Plans, the Oxford Cambridge Arc, Oxfordshire 2050 we may need to spend money on being heard through publications.

We know that members value the walks, talks, visits and our newsletters, as well as the positive contribution the Society makes to how our city develops. We hope you will wish to continue to support our work and encourage others to join.

No firm proposals have yet been made. In 1996 the individual subscription was increased from £6 to £10. A similar percentage increase would hopefully mean that we don't have to return to this issue for several years.

If you have an opinion, do get in touch. Contact details are below. **Or come to the AGM and have your say.**



Photo courtesy of Pauline Massey

OCS is a society for people who care about Oxford, want to enjoy it more fully and help shape its future.

Membership costs £10 a year (£9 by standing order) or £14 for two people at the same address (£12 by standing order). Students and local groups may join for £5; corporate members' rates on application.

See the website for how to join, or contact [Liz Grosvenor membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk](mailto:membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk) or join at our talks.

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67 Cunliffe Close, Oxford OX2 7BJ
Tel: 075 05 756 692
info@oxcivicsoc.org.uk
oxcivicsoc.org.uk | oxclean.org.uk
www.oxfordfutures.org.uk

Letters to the Editor and photos can be sent to Hilary Bradley newsletter@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or by post to the above address.

 Follow @oxcivicsoc

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