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The debates go on

Ian Green, Chairman

Over the past few months the Society has been celebrating its 50th anniversary with a series of public debates on topical themes and a series of publications. We play a key role in other debating chambers too.

Three of the most controversial issues facing the region were addressed by opposing speakers, with thoughtful contributions from packed audiences in the Town Hall. The debates were about whether to prioritise the Green Belt or new homes, how to manage air quality, and whether growth and the proposed Oxford to Cambridge expressway are necessary. The debates provided the Society's members and the Oxford public a unique platform to air their views and influence the thinking of decision makers. (See pages 6-7 for a summary of the three debates.)

Over the past 50 years the Society's aim has always been to give local people a voice on issues relating to the city region's future and in view of the success of this initial debate series we have decided to stage further debates next year. The next debate is scheduled for February 2020 and 'managing tourism in Oxford' has been suggested as a topic. If you have suggestions on ways of debating this topic or wish to suggest other topics please contact me at chairman@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

Two superb publications are now in print to mark our 50th year, a history of the Society, *Changing Oxford* by local historian Liz Woolley and *All our futures*, a booklet based on that work. You can read more about these on page 3.

One of the driving forces behind the debates and publications is a determination to increase our individual, family and corporate membership: if you are non-members reading this **please do consider supporting us**. Details are available on our website or from Liz Grosvenor, the Society's Membership Secretary, whose details are on the back page.

Working in partnership for our city region's future

As Chairman I am particularly concerned that the Society contributes effectively to ensure the inclusive development and management of Oxford and its region. Our membership of the Steering Group of the **Oxford Strategic Partnership**



The Town Hall was packed to capacity for the debate on growth and the proposed expressway which featured Councillor Ian Hudspeth (left) and Professor Danny Dorling. Sir Clive Booth (centre) chaired the debate. Photo courtesy of Peter Thompson

(OSP) is one way in which we have been working to achieve this aim.

The OSP was founded in 2003 and brings together senior representatives from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors. The core members of the OSP Steering Group are drawn from statutory services (Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, National Health Service, Thames Valley Police). Further members are representatives of key private and voluntary organisations and partnerships who have a significant contribution to make in delivering the vision for Oxford. The Chair of the OSP is Baroness Jan Royall, (Principal, Somerville College) who has kindly contributed this explanatory note for this edition of Visions:

It is my privilege to work with Oxford Civic Society, in particular with Ian Green, under the auspices of the Oxford



Building work continues at Barton Park. The first residents have moved in to the development which will eventually provide over 800 new homes, a school, sports facilities and commercial units.

Image courtesy of Lockhart Garratt

Strategic Partnership (OSP) of which I am proud to be the Chair. Oxford is a wonderful city in which to live, work, study and relax but the challenges of the 21st century are mighty and we have to ensure that these become opportunities rather than obstacles for our people and our community. I strongly believe that this can only be achieved by all parts of our society working together and that is what I value most about the OSP, the fact that it brings together representatives from the public, business, community and voluntary sector with their shared responsibilities, working towards a shared vision for the future.

*This year the theme of **inclusive growth** underpins all of our work. We recognise that for Oxford to thrive it must grow, but the well-being of the city and its citizens depends on that growth being truly inclusive, providing: the education and skills at all levels that enable our companies to employ local people; opportunities for business to invest; the housing and infrastructure that enable people to live as well as work here; the health care and security that enable all of our citizens to participate in our civic life; the environment for people to flourish and not just exist.*

There is much to be done but, working together, I am confident that we can bring about growth that is truly inclusive.

The OSP is an influencer, not an operational organisation. It brings organisations together to work in partnership, identifying strategic city challenges that will benefit from collaboration, and prioritising them based on where the partnership

can add most value. While giving special attention to inclusivity in all aspects of the development and management of the city, the overall OSP priorities include: economic growth and regeneration, stronger communities, low carbon city and safer communities.

The OSP is currently planning a series of late summer / autumn meetings on growth and what it means for Oxford and Oxfordshire. These meetings will be part of a process to build a coalition to shape future growth to benefit all, particularly those who currently do not benefit.

If you have concerns about the quality of growth taking place and being planned and which could be included for discussion in these OSP meetings please do let me know at chairman@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

The celebrations continue ...

Our autumn programme continues the celebratory theme by being bigger and more varied than ever, with a river cruise, a visit to BMW and much more on offer (see pages 3 and 11). One highlight is the visit to Oxford of **Professor James Stevens Curl**, the distinguished architectural historian who served as our first and highly influential Chairman back in 1969. Professor Curl now lives in Northern Ireland but we are delighted he is to give a talk on Wednesday 11 September on *Making dystopia*. That is the title of his latest book in which he expounds his uncompromising views on modern architecture. We can promise a fascinating evening and look forward to seeing you there!

Ian Green
Chairman



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Making a difference: our 50-year history

New publications

To mark our 50th anniversary we have issued two reports which explore how the Society has influenced the development of Oxford over the decades.

CHANGING OXFORD

Fifty years of Oxford Civic Society 1969–2019

By Liz Woolley



OXFORD
CIVIC SOCIETY
AN INDEPENDENT FORCE FOR OXFORD
SINCE 1969

We were delighted when local historian **Liz Woolley** accepted a commission to write an in-depth history of our work and achievements. It focuses on topics such as how we have influenced planning, transport, the street scene, community cohesion, green spaces and much else.

Her 62 - page assessment of our work *Changing Oxford* is a highly readable and fully illustrated

account of a remarkable journey, which began with a handful of far-sighted pioneers (one being James Stevens Curl, see below). *Changing Oxford* is published online only and you can freely download it from our website:

www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/changing-oxford

Our grateful thanks go to Liz for distilling our story so well.

OXFORD
CIVIC SOCIETY

All our futures

Celebrating 50 years of Oxford Civic Society 1969 - 2019



All our futures is a 20-page booklet summarising Liz's report, beautifully illustrated and produced. You can obtain copies at our meetings, suggested donation £3, or by post from Liz Grosvenor at 15 Lime Walk, Oxford OX3 7AB (£5 to include p & p; cheques payable to Oxford Civic Society). **Do support us by getting your copy!**

Autumn talks for your diary

Making dystopia

Wednesday 11 September 7.30pm

Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, OX1 2JA

The distinguished architectural historian **Professor James Stevens Curl** was the first Chairman of the Society. He talks about his latest book in which he laments recent trends in modern architecture which he regards as 'bizarre, unsettling, and ... remote from the aspirations and needs of humanity'.

Five years at the helm of the Ashmolean Museum

Tuesday 8 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Xa Sturgis took up his post as Director of the Ashmolean Museum in 2014. He reflects on five eventful years of running the world-famous collection.

Music making in the University of Oxford

Tuesday 15 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Edward Higginbottom was Director of Music at New College from 1976 - 2014 and is now Professor Emeritus of Choral Music in the University of Oxford. He will reflect on music making in the University and how, sometimes in spite

of itself, it has fostered musical talent. Edward observes that there are some aspects of this story that depend on the 'genius of the place'.

150 years of Kingerlee in Oxford

Wednesday 16 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium,
Longwall Street

Local historian **Liz Woolley** with a representative of the company, talks about the history of one of the city's great family firms. Kingerlee has constructed many of the best-known buildings in and around Oxford, such as the Jam Factory and New Theatre.



The vernacular buildings of Oxfordshire

Thursday 28 November 8pm

St Michael's Parish Room, Cornmarket Street

What gives our vernacular buildings their enduring appeal and special place in the landscape? Builder **Lawrence Kelly** will explore how the materials and craftsmanship used in construction affect our appreciation of these buildings and how we should approach repairs to preserve them.

Driving up standards in shared housing

Peter Thompson, Housing Group

The Housing Group welcomes Oxford's tough stance on houses in multiple occupation which provide homes for the poorest people in the city.

Many of us can recall with fond nostalgia, or otherwise, sharing houses with friends or fellow students, often in premises ranging from shabby to downright insanitary. Such houses provided a 'home', hopefully for a short time, which met basic living needs cheaply at a time in life when we were hard up.

The squalid nature of some of this housing, however, often extends outside the confines of the house, to the garden and even the neighbourhood, and, coupled with the sometimes anti-social behaviour of the occupants has led to the increasing regulation of residential properties of this type – now known as 'Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)'.

Oxford has the 14th highest number of HMOs in England and Wales – only large metropolitan authorities have more – and **20% of the city's population is estimated to live in such accommodation. HMOs thus fulfil an important housing need**, offering the only affordable solution for some in our city of astronomical rents and property prices.

In some areas however, high concentrations of HMOs are changing the character of neighbourhoods, contributing to traffic, parking and rubbish problems, and resulting in transient communities of short-term residents and erosion of community cohesion. Worse, a house condition survey in 2005 reported that HMOs provided the poorest homes in the city and that 70% were unsafe. In 2010, HMOs were responsible for over 2,000 complaints to the City Council, rising steadily and with many problems going unreported. More prosecutions against landlords were pursued by Oxford City Council than by any other council in the country.

The response of the City Council was to not only require (via an Article 4 Directive) planning consent for the creation of an

HMO, but also to make all HMOs subject to an additional licence. Thus, for an HMO to operate legally in Oxford, **both** planning consent **and** a valid licence are required.

In Planning terms, a family home is classified as a 'C3 dwelling house'. An HMO, defined as 'a property shared by between three and six unrelated individuals who are not from one household', is classified as a 'C4 House in Multiple Occupation'. With seven or more occupants it becomes a 'Large HMO', for which the classification becomes 'sui generis' (in a class of its own). Thus, the relationship of the residents is key to determining whether planning consent is required and the number of occupants will determine the use, or change of use, for which consent must be obtained.

How the new Local Plan will help

Oxford's new Local Plan (the framework of policies with which developments must comply) currently awaits formal examination for 'soundness' before adoption, but Policy H6 stipulates a maximum density of HMOs in the street (20% of properties within 100m either side), a minimum set of space standards, and acceptable facilities (defined elsewhere). Licensing of HMOs is intended to ensure that:

- the landlord or manager is a fit and proper person and the standard of management is acceptable
- the premises are suitable for occupation by the number of people allowed under the licence and vulnerable tenants are protected
- high-risk HMOs can be targeted for improvement.

The objective is to protect the welfare of the occupiers, improve integration with the neighbourhood, reduce anti-social behaviour, promote environmental improvement and improve the quality of the housing stock.

Apart from planning legislation, the principal penalties for failure to obtain a licence for an operational HMO is a significant fine and the refund to the tenants of any rent already paid during the tenancy. In June 2016 an Oxford landlord of two properties was fined £10,000 and ordered to refund nearly £3,000 in rent to tenants.

Of course, for some of Oxford's communities, the planning controls on HMOs may be a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted. But, together with the licensing regime, the policies do offer hope for the avoidance of further decline in the character of our neighbourhoods, protection of erosion of less affected areas, and an end to the dangerous and insanitary conditions which have plagued the lives of low-income residents of our city.

See page 8 for more on shared housing.



Joiners and leavers

At the AGM in April we extended a warm welcome to our new Vice President and voted in three new members of the Executive Committee. In June we paid tribute to Rosanne Bostock, who is handing over the reins of the OxClean project, and welcomed her successor.



Our new Vice President is **Richard Venables** who was, until recently, the High Sheriff of Oxfordshire. A surveyor by background, he jointly heads VSL and Partners, is a member of the Oxford Strategic Partnership and also Chair of Reciprocate, a group of businesses who support good causes. A keen hockey player, his great passion is involving young people in sport as a way of overcoming disadvantage. Richard makes a team of three Vice Presidents to strengthen our links with many different groups within the county, Tony Joyce and Professor Margaret Maden being his distinguished fellows.

New Executive Committee members



Chris Church is best known for his involvement in Friends of the Earth, both at national and local levels. He has recently been active in campaigning against over-development at Botley's neighbourhood centre. He has worked for many decades in the environmental sector, mainly advising on ways to meet environmental targets.



Sue Stewart has been a councillor for many years with an interest in planning issues. As parish councillor for Charlbury she took the lead in developing one of the first rural low-cost housing schemes, a project which led to other similar schemes elsewhere. Sue is now a parish councillor for Littlemore and is secretary of its local history society.



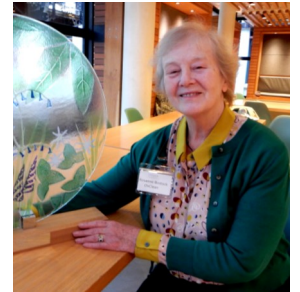
Louise Thomas is an urban designer and architect and runs an independent consultancy (TDRC). She is executive director of the Historic Towns & Villages Forum (HTVF), based in Kellogg College, Oxford. She teaches urban design at post-graduate level at the University of Westminster and is a passionate advocate for public involvement in shaping places.

Farewells

Our grateful thanks go to **John Goddard** and **Professor Tim Wilson** who stepped down from the Committee at the AGM. They brought very different experience to our work – John being a former Councillor and Tim an Honorary Curator at the Ashmolean Museum. **Tony Turton** has stepped down from the Committee for personal reasons but continues to run our websites. (*Tony urgently needs support in this role – please get in touch if you can help.*)

Rosanne Bostock: celebrating a great campaigner

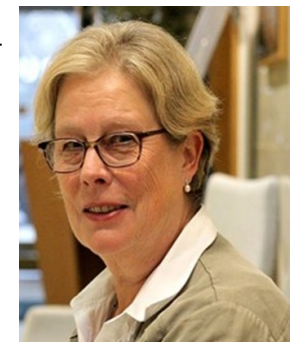
In 2007 Rosanne persuaded us to set up OxClean having seen community efforts to clear up litter in other countries – and she has been leading it ever since. She is now taking a back seat having made an indelible mark not just on the Society and the city, but also inspiring other places to start taking litter seriously. At the President's reception in June she was presented with a glass platter to mark her extraordinary contribution.



OxClean is best known for its 'Spring Clean' in March involving scores of community groups and over 1,000 volunteers. Rosanne has now spearheaded 12 such Spring Cleans, the 2019 event being much the biggest in terms of turnout, involving a record 95 groups.

But much work also goes on behind the scenes, to influence local authorities, schools and businesses. Rosanne's experience has informed national efforts to tackle litter and she is now supporting AbiBinit, the new Abingdon project.

Rosanne will remain in an advisory role and we welcome **Natasha Robinson** as the new convenor of the OxClean team. Natasha says "I look forward to continuing the amazing work that Rosanne started with OxClean, and will be focusing on widening engagement across Oxford and working with schools to encourage children to look after their neighbourhood".



The Falcon Rowing and Canoeing Club collected a huge haul of litter from the Thames and local area during our 2019 Spring Clean



OCS@50 debates

Margaret Maden, Vice President

Three public debates held in the Town Hall provided the cornerstone of our 50th anniversary celebrations. Our speakers drew appreciative audiences, giving us all much food for thought on the city region's most contested issues.

Few issues generate as much passion as the **Green Belt**. Most people feel instinctively that this must be preserved but does it need to take its present form? What effect is the policy having on sustainable development? For our first debate in April we invited **Bob Price**, recent Leader of Oxford City Council, and **Mike Tyce** of the Campaign to Protect Rural England to examine the case for and against building some of the homes we need in the Green Belt.

Bob Price spoke of population pressures and the need to support economic growth with adequate housing. The real problems of providing affordable and social housing for key workers were stressed. He said that 5% of the Green Belt is needed for a balanced housing strategy.



Bob Price, former Leader of the City Council, left, debates housing and the Green Belt with Mike Tyce from CPRE

Mike Tyce said that Oxford's Green Belt, established in 1958, represents a quarter of the county's total land area and is overwhelmingly supported by local people. The issue was about distinguishing between what Oxford and its people actually needed and growth for its own sake. Needed housing should be accommodated, although the claimed extent of the need was questionable. With full employment, Oxford cannot claim to need more economic growth.

Mike Tyce also criticised the Oxfordshire Growth Board and several of the audience members also referred to this. 'Unelected' was the main criticism but Bob Price pointed out that the Growth Board has no planning powers as these belong to its member District Councils (including the City Council) with statutory requirements for public consultation.

Some audience members argued for higher housing densities in the city. There were also strong feelings about expensive new-build houses being bought by 'rich London commuters' – couldn't there be a restrictive covenant preventing this? Isn't a thorough review of Green Belt policy needed after its 60 year existence? The lack of finance for the City Council to build social housing must be tackled by central government. The Northern Gateway development, owned by St John's College, came in for criticism, along with the North Oxford Golf Course proposals, with the fear of almost exclusive provision of more expensive housing and the likelihood that it would simply serve London commuters.

How to reduce dangerous pollution levels?

Our second debate, in May, focused on the terrible price we pay for our love affair with road vehicles. Both our speakers, **Chris Church** from Friends of the Earth and **Councillor Paul Harris**, Liberal Democrat environment spokesman on the City Council, agreed that pollution levels are wrecking the nation's health and need to be reduced drastically. Both agreed that road transport is also a key issue in climate change, which was acknowledged by the Government to be a global 'emergency' about the time the debate took place. The question was how best to reduce pollution levels and CO2 emissions and at what pace to proceed?

Chris Church spoke about the need for a radical Oxford approach to the widely-recognised problems. The Council's Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) policy was forensically examined; 'too slow' said Chris Church, 'socially regressive' said Paul Harris – small businesses and less well off people will suffer most. With 26,000 vehicle trips into and out of Oxford every day, Chris Church said we needed to act now, and think hard about the damage to health and steeply rising NHS costs. Free buses, more cycling, road user charges and increased technological innovation were advocated.

Many more suggestions came from the well-informed audience; trams, non-diesel trains, an improved cycling infrastructure along our streets, less car ownership and better shared transport (the trial of the 'Pick Me Up' bus service was much appreciated) were all cited.

Norway was much talked about, with its 47% electric car ownership being linked to its cheap hydro and wind-powered electricity supply. But against this perfection was Norway's high carbon footprint linked to electric car manufacture! Other countries were cited; Spanish cities' high levels of central city pedestrianisation, Freiburg's trams and Holland's electric bike sales at a 47% level.

Some in the audience shared concerns about the Council's ZEZ proposals adversely affecting central Oxford small businesses. Paul Harris referred to the Ricardo consultant's

– confronting controversy!

observation that in the proposed first phase, there would be 'insignificant benefits'. By implication, the strategy was to change hearts, minds and 'lifestyles' of Oxford residents and shopkeepers, many of whom, as well as delivery firms, can't afford electric vehicles. The limited consultation with citizens and businesses was a further criticism.

There was concern about the impact of many electric charging points in already crowded streets, the apparent ignoring of elderly and disabled people and, more than anything else perhaps, the lack of positive support and funding from central government, including the active promotion of technological research. Chris Church added that while the decarbonising of homes and vehicles is feasible, harder problems lie in dealing with agriculture and aviation (when is *your* next intercontinental flight?!).

One audience member added that pollution and climate change were shaping up to be such an existential threat we would soon have to face up to making radical changes to our daily lives, just as in times of war: serious food for thought!

Do we need the proposed expressway?

If there is one issue to get people talking even more than the Green Belt, it is the proposed new expressway linking Oxford and Cambridge. Packed to the gunwales, this debate in June was overwhelmingly against the proposed road. The planned motorway would be parallel to a new railway and would include 13 junctions, each with 30,000 or more new houses nearby. This idea comes from Highways England (HE), linked to the National Infrastructure Commission; a more detailed proposal is due this autumn.

Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Conservative Leader of the County Council, faced an acutely difficult task in trying to convince the audience that there are some redeeming features in the proposal. He insisted that the evidence of high growth rates, both of jobs and people, be confronted. The congestion and inadequacy of the A34 is a major problem. The 'knowledge spine' giving rise to the HE proposals should be a matter of pride. He stressed that he favours a mass transit system, using modern 'green friendly' power sources. He reminded us that as our Highways Authority, the County Council has already ensured that an additional Oxford-London Chiltern Line rail link exists, with the expressway as a relief on car commuting, while an A40 bus lane west of Oxford is agreed. Plans for relocating Park & Rides further from Oxford city centre are also being prepared.

His opponent, **Professor Danny Dorling** adopted a more macro view in that he sees the proposal as a further device to increase already unacceptable levels of inequality in our county and city. He pointed to better practices in cities such as Freiburg, Groningen and Copenhagen. (An audience member also praised Japan's policy of reducing car and increasing rail travel.) Professor Dorling recognises Oxford's growth has reached its physical limits and believes the city's 'edges' need to be renegotiated. However, along with many audience speakers, he warned of the dangers and unacceptability of more roads; CO₂, nitrous oxides, particulates have to be severely reduced as do the deaths and injuries linked to an excessive reliance on motor vehicles for people and goods. Children having to negotiate 50mph traffic to cross the A40 at Barton Park in order to get to school is shocking.

Several other speakers urged the District authorities, as well as the City Council, to use their planning powers more effectively so that housing and other building developments can be more securely linked to transport, the responsibility of the County Council. How far do any of these genuinely acknowledge the climate emergency we now confront? How far do they see that farmland and bio-diversity are of increasing importance? Can new housing really be car based? Won't computer modelling clearly demonstrate the expressway will increase rather than reduce road congestion? And so on, well into the night.....

We are immensely grateful to our six speakers and to our President, Sir Clive Booth, who conceived, developed and chaired the debates. Thanks too to all the volunteers and members who turned up to support the events. The audience clearly enjoyed the lively exchanges and most agreed they had learned something from the high level of debate. So successful have the debates been that we plan to run more in 2020. Watch this space!



Professor Danny Dorling addresses a packed Town Hall for the debate on growth and the proposed expressway

Photos courtesy of Peter Thompson

What Germany can teach us about renting

Tim Lund, Housing Group

Could Oxford improve the situation for people who rent their homes by copying the German approach to rents?

Many readers will be aware that being a private sector tenant is quite normal in Germany, without the stigma it carries here. Some may also have heard of recent measures in Berlin to cap private sector rents. In due course we will see the long-term impact, but looking at policy over the last 50 years tells us something about why private renting works well now.

Tenancies are normally for unlimited terms, so landlords have no equivalent to our detested Section 21 'no fault' evictions. This makes a much fairer balance of power between landlord and tenant, but landlords would not accept this if they risk ending up with sitting tenants paying well below the prevailing rents. However, German municipalities are required to publish regular surveys of local market rents, per square metre, with those for major cities detailing the district, age and condition of the property. It is called the *Mietspiegel* – 'rent mirror' – and an indefinite tenancy can then be agreed on the basis that rents will follow the *Mietspiegel*, with no costly, contentious renegotiations needed.

There is no reason this could not happen here. A recent Government consultation on barriers to longer private-rented sector (PRS) tenancies had a question on how rents should be indexed, including an option for a linking to a local market

average, rather than a national inflation index. This suggests that someone in Whitehall is thinking about the economics which has allowed the emergence of a large and healthy PRS in Germany. If so, they will surely be looking for local authorities to trial such an approach. Should Oxford and its surrounding areas be among them?

Politically it would be non-partisan, with wins for both landlords and tenants. While it would need initial government funding, the critical decision-making would be at local level, involving representatives of tenants and landlord groups.

A word of warning however. A *Mietspiegel* is desirable in itself, but a survey does not control rents, and a lack of housing where people want to live will push up rents, or lead to calls for rent controls and long-term disincentives for any landlord, private or public sector. Germany's lower housing costs come from cities being able to buy land at existing use value and masterplan urban extensions. In the biggest cities, densification is also needed and current moves in Berlin suggest even Germans may now struggle with this.

That aside, the German experience shows that the PRS can work for both tenants and landlords. If that is what we want too, we need to understand how that has happened. The *Mietspiegel* is an important part of the 'how'.

How homesharing meets many needs

Homeshare programmes solve two issues at once: the lack of affordable homes for younger people and older people's needs for support to live independently. And homesharing is happening here in Oxfordshire.

Alan, in his 80s, was living alone in his Oxford house when he welcomed a young research physicist, Ezra, into his home and his life. Despite the gap in years, the two have become firm friends and even travelled together to Brussels to attend the recent World Homeshare Congress.

Ezra is not, however, a lodger, he is **homesharing**, which is based on the principles of **exchange**. Ezra gets a comfortable home at well below market rates, while in exchange he helps Alan around the house and they enjoy each other's company.

Alan and Ezra were skilfully matched by Homeshare Oxford, run by Age UK Oxfordshire. All applicants are carefully screened and, if successfully matched, both parties pay a monthly fee to Age UK to support the match. "It's a win-win situation" says Marian Pocock who runs the programme. "Many older people live on their own and some don't enjoy that. Many welcome some help around the home, such as

shopping, walking the dog, putting the bins out or support to use the computer. A big attraction is the security of having someone at home, especially during the night."

Homesharing ticks many boxes: it helps to meet housing

needs for young people, often at the start of their careers, supports older people, tackles loneliness (young people are even more likely to be lonely than older ones), supports hospital discharge, makes better use of housing stock, saves the public purse and reassures two sets of families and friends that their loved ones are safe, secure and cared about. **It deserves to be part of our housing policy.** Read more at www.homeshareoxford.org.uk and www.homeshare.org



Alan and Ezra enjoying a chat

Photo courtesy of Marian Pocock

Making transport carbon neutral

Andrew Pritchard, Transport Group

The Government's recent commitment to making the UK carbon neutral by 2050 is a huge step forward in the fight against climate change. It will need major shifts in transport however.

Transport is one of the main contributors to carbon dioxide emissions and therefore major changes are needed if the UK is to meet its targets. Members of the group have contributed to discussions involving a number of groups in Oxford concerned with climate change. We are calling on the authorities to make climate change issues central to both the **County's Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5)** and **Oxfordshire 2050** (formerly the Joint Statutory Spatial Plan) both of which we are commenting on.

We have always stressed the additional benefits that can arise from electrification of transport, such as major reductions in nitrogen oxides emissions and of small particulates from tyres, all of which are detrimental to health. A tram-based Rapid Transit system (steel wheels on steel rails) would deliver multiple benefits. Walking, cycling and public transport clearly have a big role to play and it needs to be much easier to transfer between modes of transport.

Managing tourism

For some time the Transport Group has been concerned about the problems of tourist coaches in the city. So we were glad to take the opportunity to contribute to the City's Tourism Management Review Group and its report *Building a Vision for Tourism in Oxford*. This included 21 recommendations but appears to have had a lukewarm reception. In particular we suggested:

- **Immediately:** provision of greeters at coach drop-off points to advise tourists about attractions and facilities;
- **In the medium term:** introduction of a tourist tax to help support better facilities;
- **Longer term:** resolving the transport problem and provision of accommodation.

We are disappointed to hear that the future of Experience Oxfordshire, the only official tourist office in town, and a source of much expertise on tourism in the county, is under threat due to lack of financial support. There is also a clear need for better toilet and rest facilities for visitors to Oxford.

Discussions with Phil Southall of the Oxford Bus Company showed that tourist coach operators are very much in touch with each other and would be likely to welcome firm guidance on where to drop off tourists and to park. We noted that many Italian cities have firm policies to keep tourist coaches out of their historic centres.

We have suggested that a cable car linking the centre of the city to Redbridge Park & Ride, where tourist buses could park

and their drivers rest, has potential to reduce the problem, and should be investigated further.

Improving the Botley Road corridor

We attended recent public consultations on plans for this corridor. The effects of these are limited by the decision not to consider any further land take, and we were surprised to learn that they had been prepared without consideration of either the proposed Rapid Transit or the County's LTP5.

While there are some improvements for cyclists and pedestrians, and the adoption of 'floating' bus stops to avoid conflict between cyclists and passengers, there is little that will affect the main pinch points. At the access to the Park & Ride, abolition of the westbound filter lane in favour of two exit lanes from the P&R will hold up traffic even more than at present, reducing any benefit from a short length of westbound bus lane both sides of Lamarsh Road.

The proposed duration of the works, 15 months, suggests long periods of one-way working, with catastrophic effects on traffic in the area.

We again proposed a dedicated access to the Park & Ride from the A34/A420 interchange, and the creation of a Botley Road by-pass for pedestrian, cycle and public transport use, starting from the Park & Ride, and going through the retail estate, Osney Mead and across the river and railway to the Westgate and Oxpens. This could be the first stage of an electric Rapid Transit.

A key priority is to make cycling safer in Botley Road. It is a vital route for commuters and school children among others. We have suggested a by-pass for cyclists

Photo courtesy of Chris Browne of Pedal and Post



Booking form

Autumn 2019 ticketed events

Closing date for applications: **Monday 12 August** 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 ☺
Our ancient water boundaries – a cruise Monday 2 September at 1.45pm @£15		
Worcester College gardens – a visit Wednesday 11 September 2pm Wednesday 11 September at 4pm <i>Please circle your preferred time</i> @£12		
Newman College – a visit Tuesday 24 September at 2.30pm@£8		
The BMW factory – a visit Wednesday 2 October at 12.45pm@£16		
Headington's arboretum – a walk Sunday 20 October at 2pm@£8		
Art at Nuffield College – a visit Saturday 9 November at 10.30am@£8		

Note: Some events are more expensive than usual because of the fee charged by the provider.

☺ Events are sometimes oversubscribed. If you rank your choices in order of preference we'll try to ensure you get a place on your favourite.

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'

September – November 2019

**ticketed events*

Monday 2 September 1.45pm
Our ancient water boundaries* a river cruise led by Mark Davies

Weds 11 September 2pm and 4pm
Worcester College gardens*, a visit led by the head gardener

Wednesday 11 September 7.30pm
Making dystopia, a talk by James Stevens Curl
Rewley House

Tuesday 24 September 2.30pm
Newman College, Littlemore*, a visit

Wednesday 2 October 12.45pm
The BMW factory*, a visit

Tuesday 8 October 8pm
Five years at the Ashmolean Museum, a talk by Xa Sturgis
Magdalen College Auditorium

Tuesday 15 October 8pm
Music making in Oxford University, a talk by Edward Higginbottom
Magdalen College Auditorium

Wednesday 16 October 8pm
150 years of Kingerlee in Oxford, a talk by Liz Woolley
Magdalen College Auditorium

Sunday 20 October 2pm
Headington's arboretum, a walk led by Ian Gourlay

Saturday 9 November 10.30am
Art at Nuffield College*, a visit led by Richard Mayou

Thursday 28 November 8pm
The vernacular buildings of Oxfordshire, a talk by Lawrence Kelly
St Michael's Parish Room



OCS@50 programme

September – November 2019

Open talks – all welcome

We have so many events this season that we've detailed the talks on page 3. Below is a list of subjects and dates only. Talks are free, just turn up – and please help us to recruit new members by bringing a guest

Making dystopia

Wednesday 11 September 7.30pm

Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, OX1 2JA

Speaker: Professor James Stevens Curl, architectural historian and first Chairman of the Society

Five years at the helm of the Ashmolean Museum

Tuesday 8 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Speaker: Xa Sturgis, Director of the Ashmolean

Music making in Oxford University

Tuesday 15 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Speaker: Edward Higginbottom, Professor Emeritus of Choral Music at Oxford University

150 years of Kingerlee in Oxford

Wednesday 16 October 8pm

Magdalen College Auditorium, Longwall Street

Speaker: Liz Woolley, local historian, with a representative of the company

The vernacular buildings of Oxfordshire

Thursday 28 November 8pm

St Michael's Parish Room, Cornmarket Street

Speaker: Lawrence Kelly, builder and enthusiast

Members-only walks and visits

Tickets are needed for these events: bookings by 12 August

Our ancient water boundaries – a river cruise

Monday 2 September 1.45pm

Mark Davies completes his exploration of the city's water boundaries with a talk and convivial cruise from Folly Bridge and back. You can buy drinks on the boat and there's an option to lunch at a discount price at the Folly Restaurant.

Worcester College Gardens and the Sultan Nazrin Shah Centre – a visit

Wednesday 11 September 2pm and 4pm



Worcester College gardens are famous for their rare plants and exquisite design. This visit will combine a tour of the gardens, led by the head gardener, with a walk around the exterior of the impressive Sultan Nazrin Shah Centre, winner of the RIBA South Building of the Year award in 2018.

Newman College, Littlemore – a visit

Tuesday 24 September 2.30pm

By popular request we are repeating this visit to the college founded by Cardinal Newman when he was the local vicar. This 1.5-hour tour, led by one of the sisters of this small community, will take in the chapel, library and a museum in Newman's room. Newman is to be canonised this autumn.

Making the Mini – a visit to the BMW factory

Wednesday 2 October 12.45pm

BMW's vast industrial complex uses some of the most sophisticated production engineering in the world to produce 1,000 Minis every day. This fascinating 1.5-hour tour will give you a new insight into an Oxford success story.

Headington's arboretum – a walk

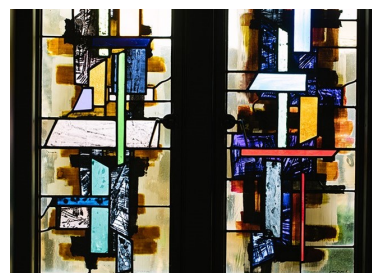
Sunday 20 October 2pm

Headington Hill Park has been maintained as an arboretum since 1953 with over 1,000 specimen trees. This 1.5-hour walk, led by Ian Gourlay, Chair of the Friends of the Park, will highlight a few of the most interesting, old and rare specimens. *Note that strong footwear is advised.*

Art at Nuffield College – a visit

Saturday 9 November 10.30am

Led by Emeritus Professor Richard Mayou, former chairman of the Nuffield College Art Acquisitions Committee, the visit will include the John Piper Chapel with stained glass by Piper/Reyntiens and the distinguished modern and contemporary art collection in the Quad, the Hall and the Senior and Junior Common Rooms.



Celebrating 100 Blue Plaques!

Eda Forbes



Crowds gathered in the High Street for the unveiling of the plaque to George Claridge Druce, while below, onlookers with a Blue Plaque design on their sweatshirts acknowledged Oxford's role in the discovery of penicillin.

Photos courtesy of Stephanie Jenkins

In 2018, the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board reached a wonderful milestone when it unveiled its 100th plaque.

Blue Plaques at the **Sir William Dunn School of Pathology** and the **Old Radcliffe Infirmary** now mark the incomparable achievement of Howard Florey and his team in developing the wonder drug penicillin in 1941. We were very proud to highlight this Oxford first. Another historic site of great local interest is the **former Chapel of St Ignatius (1793)** in St Clements, the first Roman Catholic place of worship built in Oxford after the Reformation. The discreet position of the building, set well back from the road, attests to the continuing anti-Catholic sentiment of the time.

Four remarkable personalities were honoured last year. **George Claridge Druce (1850–1932)**, a man of very humble origins, became an esteemed amateur botanist and FRS as well as running a pharmacy at 118 High Street and serving as city councillor and mayor. **James Legge (1815–1896)**, a missionary in Hong Kong and mediator of Chinese language and literature for people in the West, became the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford. The plaque was installed at his former home, 3 Keble Road.

W H Dines (1855–1927), ingenious pioneering meteorologist, is honoured at Brook Street, Benson, where his experimental observatory nearby at Colne House (now

demolished) predated the present Benson weather station. **Andrea Angel (1877–1917)**, a brilliant Christ Church chemist sent to supervise the Silvertown munitions factory in London, died giving his life for others in the notorious explosion there in 1917. His Oxford home at 15 Banbury Road now bears the plaque for this home-front hero who was awarded the Edward medal, the equivalent of the George Cross today.

The Oxfordshire Blue Plaques scheme, set up in 1999, was the inspiration of Sir Hugo Brunner, then Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, and Edwin Townsend-Coles, a former Chairman of the Society. Their optimism about its viability has been vindicated. **In this 50th anniversary year of OCS we reiterate our enormous gratitude to the Society for its enabling role in supporting our running costs over the years.**

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 direct debit) or £14 for two people at the same address (£12 by direct debit). Students and local groups may join for £5; corporate members' rates on application. You can join online, at our talks, or contact Liz Grosvenor at membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

Oxford Civic Society


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