

July 2023

Number 155

New President's Address



The new OCS team:
Tim Stevenson, President, far right;
Ian Green, Chair, far left;
Gillian Coates, Vice-Chair, centre.

I was delighted and honoured to be elected as the new President of Oxford Civic Society at their Special General Meeting on 14 June.

I have much to learn about the Civic Society's work, but I bring to the role my own experience of Oxford. This runs in parallel with the 50-year life of the society: from my time as an undergraduate in the late 1960s, to my life here with my family, living in the same house in Oxford for 38 years, and to my time as Oxfordshire's Lord Lieutenant between 2008 and 2021.

Throughout this period, the city has grown, developed and achieved substantial success: economically, socially and in enhancing its reputation as a great place in which to live, work, study and relax. At the same time, it has also had to confront and manage the continuing demands of a growing, increasingly diverse population; of significant social inequality, unemployment and poverty; of insufficient housing; of major transport challenges and of threats to its unique heritage, while without doubt remaining one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. Those challenges will continue to confront us. Finding a way through them will need patience, strong community engagement, money and flexibility if they are to be met. They will need rational, informed debate focusing not just on the short, but on the medium to long term, bringing together the pieces of a complex jigsaw.

That is where the Civic Society comes in. For half a century it has been here as a non-political, non-profit making organisation, with an enviably strong volunteer ethos. The **commitment** of its volunteer base combines wide and professional understanding

of the key elements of long-term thinking covering planning, transport and housing policy. Its non-combative approach to **cooperation** on the key issues has built trust with other civic, university and commercial organisations. Its **credibility** has been developed on the back of its impressively detailed, careful research and consideration across a broad range of issues.

Oxford is lucky to have such a paradigm example of what citizens can achieve with focus and commitment. I am delighted to be joining such a successful team.

Tim Stevenson, Oxford Civic Society President

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Appreciation of the outgoing President, Sir Clive Booth

Clive Booth agreed to become the Oxford Civic Society's President in 2017. The ensuing benefits (as with Hugo Brunner, his predecessor) have been great, at every level: not surprisingly, given his Cambridge 1st, his US Doctorate, his very distinguished, long and widespread work experience as a senior civil servant (as PPS to the Secretary of State) and then leading major educational organisations, culminating in running our own Oxford Brookes University until 1997.

This was followed by his positions as Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, Centrex, the Teacher-Training Agency and the Nurses Pay Review Body, plus working with reducing prisoners' re-offending, the SE England Development Agency, the World Bank, the Police and the British Council, followed by an extremely busy 'retirement' from which so many bodies have, like OCS, gained considerable advantage.

We were so fortunate that Clive and Margaret decided to stay in Oxford, and that in 2009 they joined the Civic Society. Gradually, because Clive is very modest, we began to realise the treasure we had. His taking over the coordination of the Planning Group was so welcome, and we much appreciated his hard work there, which he kept on whilst President.

As we got to know him, his personal qualities emerged: colleagues all noticed (and we have all personally experienced) his kindness, courtesy, sense of humour, fun, dynamism,

determination, fairness, his and Margaret's hospitality and his way of bringing one into his line of thinking with a mix of sense and measured argument. The Programme Group mention his breadth of interest and contacts that made him invaluable, coming up with ideas and the right people for each event.

Clive has presided over a time of immense progress in the society's activities. Bob Price, former Leader of Oxford City Council, commented on how grateful they were for our 'hugely valuable and proactive contribution to strategic planning and policy-making; the City Council now sees it as one of the first ports of call when it comes to these issues'. There has been much fruitful, ever-increasing liaison with the two universities, the County Council and many other organisations involved in planning the future of Oxford City and its surroundings.

Perhaps one of Clive Booth's most memorable contributions was leading the society's 50th anniversary celebrations with a series of three very well-attended public debates in the Town Hall.

Thank you, Clive.

Gillian Argyle, retired member of Executive Committee



Tony Joyce 1930-2023

It is with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Tony at the great age of 93, on 21 July, at home in Blenheim Drive. Tony was the longest-serving Chairman in the history of Oxford Civic Society. He assumed the role in the new millennium and steered the society for the next decade, steadily reinforcing its reputation and influence with local government and many of the institutions which make Oxford what it is.

Tony led the society through a period of huge change and plenty of threats. Having returned to Oxford on his retirement from teaching in 1992, he settled in Headington and promptly became involved in community affairs, leading to becoming Chair of OCS. In that role he worked tirelessly and fearlessly to save and enhance what was great about Oxford, and to constrain what he regarded as damaging.

Some of the projects in which he was successful, and which illustrate the breadth of his interests, were Oxford Museum, the development of the Oxford Brookes University Headington Campus, and the OxClean annual litter-picking operation. He was also involved in planning issues, especially efforts to resolve the intractable problems of traffic and transportation. He was a strong advocate for much better public transport, the improvement of the pioneering Park and

Ride system and redevelopment of the railway station.

We were delighted when Tony was awarded the Lord Mayor's Certificate of Honour. For much of his period as Chairman he also served as secretary to the Convenor of the Planning Group, Kate Miller, later Joyce. The Group regularly scrutinised some 200 planning applications a year.

Tony's personality was one of delightful charm, a sense of proportion and a wit which emerged whenever one had cause to engage. He cultivated relationships of mutual respect with key players and exerted his influence and leadership, not by force or coercion, but by quiet, considered force of argument, and persistence and determination. As his successor as Chairman of OCS, I will always remember the kindness, sympathy and friendship which he and Kate showed, and the support and guidance which he unstintingly provided.

Tony will be remembered with great respect and affection by all of us who had the benefit of working with him, and his influence will persist in our own judgements and, of course, in many aspects of the lives we enjoy in this beautiful city.

Peter Thompson

The City Council's new Corporate Plan

In 2018 Oxford City Council published its vision of the kind of city that Oxford could be in 2050: 'Oxford2050'. This vision emerged from widespread consultation with residents and community groups about the future of the city's employment and education, people and communities, built and natural environment, transport and connectivity and culture and leisure.

At the heart of the vision was a determination that Oxford should be a more affordable place to live, and that the current inequalities in income and life chances for the people of Oxford should be massively reduced. Other key features were the protection of the city's heritage and natural environment, and the belief that we can be a global centre for the knowledge-based economy. The full vision is available at www.oxford2050.com and includes this drawing by Oxford artist Robert Eyles of Broad Street as a traffic-free festive site.

Oxford2050 has since underpinned the City Council's work in planning for the future. It is the basis for the Local Plan (which sets out how the city will develop over time), and Corporate Plan (on the City Council's priorities and planned work). The current Corporate Plan has been running from 2020 and work is now starting on a new Corporate Plan for 2024–2028.

Towards the end of the year we will all be asked to participate in the formulation of this new Corporate Plan. An initial draft has been prepared which includes the proposal to continue the four themes of the current Corporate Plan:

Enable an Inclusive Economy – Oxford needs a more inclusive economy in which wealth is distributed across our communities and where all citizens can share in the benefits of growth.

Deliver More Affordable Housing – intervention is needed to address Oxford's housing crisis where existing homes are unaffordable for many and demand for good quality homes outstrips what is available.

Support Thriving Communities – Oxford's diverse communities should be equipped, supported and enabled to tackle inequality and ensure that everyone is able to play a full part in the life of our city.

Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford – all new building by developers in Oxford should be significantly more energy-efficient; enforcing higher energy-efficiency standards for residential and commercial landlords; air quality improvements throughout the city; our streets, neighbourhoods and open spaces should be greener with more trees, planting and increased biodiversity; making a city which is more resilient to climate change, including through improved flood defences.

Are these themes still the right approach to shape the development and management of the city in 2024–2028?

Are there other themes, or are there priorities in the draft themes which need to be identified?

To make sure that Oxford Civic Society is ready to discuss the next Corporate Plan with the City Council, please let us know your views of what will be most important to you in the city over the next 5 years.

Ian Green, Oxford Civic Society Chairman;
chairman@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk



The value of volunteers

A recommendation from our Vice-President

Volunteering is a huge force for good in our country.

Although volunteer numbers have been declining over the past decade, nonetheless there remain significant numbers of our fellow citizens who give up their time (unpaid), skills and energy to serve others. The annual Community Life Survey (CLS), published by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) for the year ending September 2022, stated that "34% of respondents (approximately 16 million people in England) had taken part in either formal or informal volunteering at least once a month... In the same period, 55% (approximately 25 million people in England) had taken part in either formal or informal volunteering at least once in the last 12 months." The annual economic worth of volunteering is estimated to be around £20 billion.

This spirit of altruism needs to be celebrated and harnessed. I was pleased that Gillian Coates, Vice-Chair of the Oxford Civic Society, led a superb day of 'Celebrating East Oxford's Volunteers' during the Coronation celebrations, in partnership with Flo's in the Park and the Oxford Foundation. We need more of this!

Volunteers can be found in many sectors of society: for example, our legal system operates through magistrates (some 12,000 in England and Wales), all unpaid but without whom our justice system would come to a halt. The many other sectors to which volunteers make a significant contribution include charities, community groups, civic bodies and organisations, faith-based organisations, cultural and recreational groups, climate and the environment, animal welfare, healthcare, leisure and sports. This list is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates the depth and breadth of volunteering in our county and country.

I had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the remarkable contribution that volunteering makes in our county during my year as High Sheriff (2021–22). Through the awards we handed out, I celebrated and recognised those individuals and voluntary groups who served their communities during the pandemic. These were groups that carried out a whole range of activities to meet needs in their local community. Some volunteered to drive elderly members of their community to appointments with their GP surgery or hospital. Others collected prescriptions, groceries, made phone calls to provide a listening ear for the lonely, some supported the hugely successful vaccination programme, and so much more. I discovered voluntary groups serving our county's environment with innovative and creative ideas: planting thousands of trees, restoring and rejuvenating green spaces, educating both our young and old in sustainable living, raising awareness of new sustainable forms of farming and transport – just to mention a few.

I have always been passionate about bringing people together. Annually the Oxford Council of Faiths organises the 'Interfaith Friendship Walk'. This happens each year thanks to individuals volunteering from many different backgrounds, but with a shared vision to bring people together for conversation, friendships and deepening understanding.

The Community Life Survey suggested three top motivating drivers for volunteers: first, that they wanted to make a difference by helping people; second, that the cause itself was important to them; and third, that they had spare time. Interestingly, the major obstacles to volunteering were work commitments and looking after children. Some employers encourage and facilitate volunteering, but clearly others could make this a priority and assist their employees in the experience of volunteering.

Research suggests that those who volunteer are happier, have better mental health and self-esteem, broaden their friendships and social networks, are more likely to access future volunteering opportunities. Clearly a causal relationship exists between past and present volunteering: those who have volunteered in the past are more likely to volunteer again.

This also raises the question of the future vision for volunteering: that if we are to arrest the current gradual decline, we need to invest resources and time in nurturing a new generation of young people whose educational experience entails a volunteering component. By doing so we can embed volunteering in the very DNA of our future generations.

Imam Monawar Hussain is Vice-President of Oxford Civic Society; Muslim Tutor at Eton College, Windsor; Muslim Chaplain to the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; and Founder of the Oxford Foundation.



Preparing for Oxford City's next strategic plan

Gillian Coates reports on the Planning Group

As the lead article describes, much work is going into the preparation for Oxford City's next strategic plan. For some time now, the Planning Group has been discussing how the city is changing and what we think the 'vision' for the city should be. It is certainly not predominantly 'gown', with the high-quality scientific research which will be developed in the proposed new laboratories and innovation centres planned for Osney Mead, Oxpens and the Science Parks; it must also be significantly 'town', whose priorities deserve vocal representation in the strategic plan. In order to make a positive contribution to this overall balance, we have formed a working group which will report to the Council: outlining practical, policy-based recommendations to help tackle the challenges of sustainable growth in relation to heritage, and to empower local communities to be part of the vision.

The east of the city will be significantly affected by numerous developments, and the Planning Group are actively engaged with Redevco, the developers of Templars Square. The recent survey generated vital information on what the local

community would like to see as part of the development. The responses to the survey demonstrated that the younger population in the area have real concerns about their environment and what facilities are available to them. We will be meeting with the developers again when results of their feasibility study are available which should reveal what the local community need and want for the area. Adjacent to Templars Square are Blackbird Leys and Knights Road, and the infrastructure needs of these communities must be considered alongside those of the Square.

OCS is concerned to become more involved with residents in the east of the city, so we are planning a public forum on developments in the area this autumn. Many of you may have attended our Celebrating Volunteers day on 8 May at Flo's Café, which was the first of a series of annual events we are planning. Watch this space!

Botley Road and buses

Andrew Pritchard reports on concerns of the Transport Group

The Transport Group has been keeping a close watch on the works at the Botley Road railway bridge, and has written to the appropriate authorities expressing our concerns about the effects of the road closures on those wishing to access the city centre from the west, and trading by the various businesses nearby. We have had no responses, and the relatively low tempo of work beneath the bridge raises questions as to why one-way working has not been permitted for at least part of the time, and whether the end date of 29 October for the service diversion works will be achieved.



With tourism now rapidly recovering after Covid-19, the local Local Enterprise Partnership organised a meeting on Destination Management, to encourage tourists to spend more time and money on their visits to Oxfordshire. We submitted a paper on a number of aspects of tourism in Oxfordshire, including the transport aspects, which have given rise to concerns by members about the numbers of coaches delivering tourists and parking in the centre. The meeting showed what a wide range of potential destinations existed in the county, but despite lobbying the organisers, failed to address the questions of how they got here.

We are now represented on a new organisation, Oxfordshire for Buses (O4B), one of whose purposes is to provide input from the public to a number of working groups that have been set up as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, itself part of the government's long-term strategy for England, 'Bus Back Better'. This will not supersede our regular meeting with members of Oxford's bus companies.

One of our members, Nigel Fulford, who has spent his life in the railway industry, gave a well-attended talk on Railways in Oxfordshire at the recent special AGM. None of those who attended will ever again be in doubt about what is meant by 'train paths'.

OCS Calendar

'Cut out and keep'

September–December 2023

*ticketed events

Tuesday 12 September

NOTE EARLIER TIME 6pm

Managing Oxford's city centre, a talk by Diana Fawcett
Rewley House

Thursday 28 September 8pm

An overview of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, a talk by Dr Tim King
Rewley House



Tuesday 10 October 8pm

Planning for the future, a talk by David Butler
Rewley House

Saturday 14 October* 10am

East Oxford's Interwar Estates, a walk led by Frances Moody

Tuesday 7 November* 11am

Oxfam logistics centre, Bicester

Thursday 16 November

NOTE EARLIER TIME 6pm

Stories of Middle Way, a talk by Gareth Winrow
Rewley House

Sunday 19 November* 12pm

The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD) tour

Wednesday 6 December* 12pm

St John's College libraries and exhibition room

Booking details

How to book tickets

We are now using Eventbrite to take online bookings for all our guided tours and visits.

Please go to our website www.oxcivicsoc.org.uk/programme/ and click on 'visits & guided tours' to book your place on these visits and pay for them. If you find we have reached our maximum capacity for a particular event, please make use of the **waitlist** function in Eventbrite.

Bookings are taken on a first come – first served basis but the lists will stay open until seven days before the event. If you are offered a ticket via the waitlist you have 72 hours to claim it. A joint member may book two tickets.

You can cancel your booking up to 30 days before the event and get a partial refund – Eventbrite takes a small percentage of the fee. After that no refunds can be offered.

If you book and cannot attend the event, we urge you to cancel as soon as you can so that someone else can take your place. Our events are popular and we almost always have a waiting list.

If you can't access a computer or smartphone to book via Eventbrite, please contact the Society so that we can arrange an alternative booking route for you. Note we no longer have an 'office' phone but you can contact us by email

events@oxcivicsoc.org.uk or by post (see the back page). Please tell us which event/s you are booking for, how many tickets you need, and enclose a cheque payable to Oxford Civic Society (one cheque for each event).

Please note: our guided tours and visits are open to MEMBERS ONLY. If you book a ticket and are NOT a fully-paid-up member you will need to join.



Event	Price
East Oxford's Interwar Estates Saturday 14 November, 10am	£8
Oxfam logistics centre, Bicester Tuesday 7 November, 11am	£8
The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD) tour Sunday 19 November, 12pm	£22
St John's College libraries and exhibition room Wednesday 6 December, 12pm	£8



Programme September - December 2023

Talks – all welcome

Talks are free and don't need to be booked ahead, just turn up.

Managing Oxford's city centre

Tuesday 12 September, 6pm (NOTE EARLIER TIME)
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

Diana Fawcett has been Oxford City Centre Manager since April 2022, and prior to that was Aylesbury Town Centre and Regeneration Manager. During this talk, rescheduled from March, Diana will provide an update on the City Centre Action Plan and the projects planned within it for the next eight years to ensure that Oxford is a 'world-class city'.



An overview of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

Thursday 28 September, 8pm
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

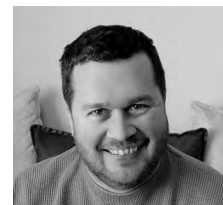
The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) is subject to a Public Enquiry. **Dr Tim King** is an Oxford native, a scientist who grew up in North Hinksey. He has followed the OFAS for 11 years: its geography, hydrology, economics, biodiversity and planning applications. He has met both proponents and opponents. His main purposes in this talk are to explain the history of Oxford floods and the current Environment Agency proposal, and to discuss the Scheme's strengths and weaknesses.



Planning for the future

Tuesday 10 October, 8pm
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

David Butler, Head of Planning at Oxford City Council, will discuss how planning is changing both at a national and at a local level, what changes are coming in the future, and what that might mean for us all.



Stories of Middle Way

Thursday 16 November, 6pm
Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square

In his book *The Butcher, The Tailor, The Picture-Frame Maker... Stories of Middle Way*, **Gareth Winrow** outlined an alternative history of Oxford by following the stories of people connected with the property where he now lives on Middle Way in Summertown. Much more than a house/land history, this talk will also examine how Summertown evolved from being primarily an artisans' village to today's well-heeled suburb of Oxford.



Members-only visits and guided tours

Tickets are needed for these events: tickets on a first come – first served basis. See page 6 for details.

East Oxford's Interwar Estates

Saturday 14 October, 10am

This two-hour walk will look at the interwar speculative and council estates in Cowley/Rose Hill. Our guide, **Frances Moody**, graduated from Oxford University with a Distinction in her Local History Master of Studies degree. The walk will start at Rose Hill, looking at the council and speculative estates there; then Florence Park, Rhymers Lane and White City, finishing on Cumberland Road in the first ever council estate. Frances will focus on the styles of housing, the rationale behind their design and plan, and will talk about the people who first lived in the houses.



Oxfam logistics centre, Bicester

Tuesday 7 November, 11am

Oxfam's 2,000 sq m warehouse in Bicester is the heart of their operations. Equipment is ready-packed, and available for dispatch by air, sea or road at short notice. This tour will provide a unique insight into Oxfam's emergency work, covering topics



Photo courtesy of Phil Kirk/Oxfam

such as supply chain aspects of water and sanitation, plus health promotion, shelter, communication and climate change.

The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD) tour

Saturday 19 November, 11am

This behind-the-scenes experience will explain how TOAD makes their award-winning vodka, gin and rye whisky, following every step of the journey from seed to still – and into the bottle. The tour lasts 60 minutes and includes a welcome drink and tastings of the award-winning Oxford Rye Gin, Oxford Rye Vodka, Oxford Rye and partnership gins, Physic and Ashmolean.



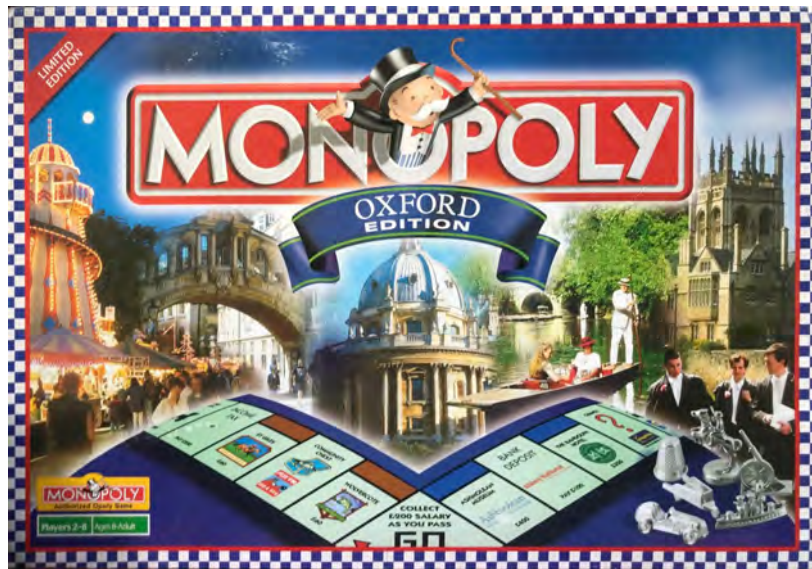
St John's College libraries and exhibition room

Wednesday 6 December, 12pm

St John's College opened its new Library and Study Centre in 2019, and will reopen the refurbished historic libraries soon. This tour by one of the college librarians will include parts of this new building, plus the historic Laudian Library, the Old Library, as well as the new exhibition room.



Oxford Monopoly



Oxford first had its own Monopoly board in 2001, but its sale was discontinued some years ago. Since then there has been a campaign for a new edition, and Monopoly bosses Winning Moves UK have confirmed that a new board will be launched in November this year, with Oxford-themed property squares and Chance and Community Chest cards. Last time, the Ashmolean Museum and the Randolph Hotel were the game's most expensive squares; but they announced: "This time round everything is up for grabs and the public will have its say."

Well, here are some modifications that committed Oxford residents might suggest!

- Given our anxieties about house purchase, shouldn't there be a category of affordable housing, and maybe a more realistic alternative of renting accommodation?
- And given the huge expansion in new hotels in Oxford, shouldn't we be discouraging further purchases in that sector?
- The cheapest property on the old board was Wolvercote; no doubt the current local residents would dispute that designation.
- Obviously, no square for Botley Road, since it's closed for most of the year.
- What's this about Free Parking? There's not much of that in Oxford, so it should really be designated as for residents or non-residents..
- The pieces that move around the board are not very representative of modern transport options: surely include a bicycle, a train and maybe a punt?


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

Membership costs £15 (£25 for two people at the same address) with concessions for students and residents associations. Corporate rates on application. You can join online or contact Liz Grosvenor at membership@oxcivicsoc.org.uk

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