

SPRING NEWSLETTER

April 2010

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This meeting will be held on Friday, 7th May at 8 p.m. in the Parish Hall, Dunstan Road. For members of the Friends the agenda for the meeting, the accounts for 2009, and the minutes of last year's Annual General Meeting are enclosed with this newsletter. **Please bring these papers with you to the meeting along with your membership card.**

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions of £5 per household for the current year are now due. Forms for the payment of subscriptions were sent out with the Autumn Newsletter and many households have already paid theirs, for which many thanks. If you have not already paid you may do so either now, or at the AGM, by cheque. New members who are always welcome, and those members who have not yet renewed their subscriptions, are asked to complete the attached form and send it with their payment to the Hon. Treasurer, Peter Gray at 39 Old High Street. **Cheques should be made payable to The Friends of Old Headington.**

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The present committee is Sarah King (Chairman), Hugh Ferris, Janet Giles, Peter Gray (Hon. Treasurer), Veronica Hurst, David Rowe, Stella Welford (Hon. Secretary) and Zoe Traill with John Rawson co-opted as our architectural adviser and Audrey Mullender, Principal of Ruskin College, as a co-opted member. The terms of office of Veronica Hurst, David Rowe, Zoe Traill, Sarah King and Stella Welford expire this year and they are willing to stand for re-election for a further period of two years with the exception of David Rowe who sadly has decided not to seek re-election. We are very grateful to him for his help and advice during his time on the committee. Peter McCarter was invited after the last AGM to join the committee on his return to Old Headington and he therefore needs to be formally nominated and elected.

Nomination forms will be available from the Secretary so please get in touch with her if you would like to make a nomination: any nominee must be a member of the Friends.

ENHANCEMENT AWARD

This award is made for work on buildings, walls, trees etc. which in your opinion, and ultimately the committee's opinion, has enhanced the conservation area. To qualify, any proposal must be for work completed since the last AGM. Please send your suggestions to the Secretary by Friday, 23rd April so that the committee can consider them in time for the award to be presented at the AGM on 7th May. **The committee will welcome proposals from residents and is keen not to be the only nominator of work worthy of consideration.** If, however, the committee considers that no single project proposed stands out it may decide not to make the award.

OPEN GARDENS

A date for your diary with details later: the gardens will be open during the afternoon of Sunday, 13th June.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FRIENDS OF OLD HEADINGTON

You will know from earlier newsletters that 2010 marks the fiftieth year of the existence of the Friends and it is planned that there will be events during the summer in celebration. We shall of course have our usual Open Gardens event, and are planning a social event later in the summer with an exhibition about the history of the village and the conservation area. There will be more information in a later newsletter.

OXFORD PRESERVATION TRUST

The Trust is organising a walk, lasting just over 1-1/2 hours, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Friends of Old Headington with as they say, “a stroll around this charming village full of historic interest, past OPT land, and on to the former hamlet of Barton”. The walk will be during the afternoon of **Sunday, 2nd May, starting at 2.30** and will be led by local historian and author, Malcolm Graham.

Please get in touch with the Friends’ Hon. Secretary by Friday, 23rd April in order to make a booking and she will give you further details.

RUSKIN COLLEGE

An update from the Principal, Professor Audrey Mullender

“After several years of planning and preparation, Ruskin College’s redevelopment of its Old Headington site is finally under way. A local building firm, Beard, is undertaking Phase 1 of the project, commencing on 29th March 2010. This involves the refurbishment of the four buildings to the west of the Ruskin site: Smith, Beatrice Webb, Biko and Bowen. The first of these will mainly house offices, with a small amount of teaching space, and the other three will remain as student residences, re-opening in October for the start of the Autumn Term.

Ruskin has also just applied for planning consent for a modified version of the main Academic Building, to be constructed next to the Rookery, as Phase 2 of the overall project. Tawney Hall, the 1960s extension to the east of the Rookery, will be demolished during August, and the new building will take shape between then and mid-2012. There will be site works, such as drainage and service upgrading, during both phases of the project.

All construction traffic will use the upper half of the College’s main drive during Phase 1 and a temporary internal construction route during Phase 2. None will use Stoke Place.

While I’m writing, if you know any adult who never got the chance to finish their education, we still have places on most of our courses for this Autumn. Go to www.ruskin.ac.uk for more details”.

LONDON ROAD TRAFFIC STUDY

The County Council Highways Department has issued a report *Control of Noise and Vibration* in connection with the work proposed for the area along London Road between Osler Road and Wharton Road. The contact details for complaints are: Karen Seal – email kseal@oxford.gov.uk; phone no. 252316.

TRAFFIC AND RELATED PROBLEMS

Report from Traffic Sub-Committee:

During the past year the committee has continued to press for a reduction in the volume and speed of traffic through the village. We have been working on several fronts.

In November, Aron Wisdom, a Transport Planner with Oxfordshire County Council, met with 16 residents in the village and noted our concerns. We followed this up by sending him copies of our plans for minor works designed to reduce speed and to enhance the appearance of our streets. Aron has confirmed that our plans seem sensible and he has advised us to check them with the Conservation team at the City Council. However, he has also warned that no resources are currently available, given the lack of traffic related injuries and deaths in Old Headington. We are still waiting for the final version of his site report and for an inspection of the narrowing point at the west end of Barton Lane. We are also still waiting for another council official to prepare preliminary costings for our proposals. A further frustration has been that we have so far failed to have any discussions with the Conservation team at the City Council. We understand that they are very busy and short-staffed.

The next phase of the London Road improvements will begin shortly and is scheduled to continue for eight months. We have pressed the County Council to install measures to deter additional rat-running through the village. However, we have had no response to our direct enquiries. The response given to our local councillors is that the planners do not expect any significant increase in traffic delays on the London Rd and therefore see no need for preventive measures.

Members of our committee also attend the Headington Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) organised by the police. As a result of our comments there have been covert surveys of vehicle speeds in Old High Street. These confirmed the high volume of traffic (17,914 vehicles in the week 16-22nd July 2009 with a weekday average of 2,725 vehicles) but did not record excessive speeds (mean speed 21.5mph). These figures pre-date the introduction of the 20mph limit, last September. Since September the lack of enforcement of this limit has been a regular point of discussion at NAG meetings as in the local media. We have been told that the County Council is planning to do a speed monitoring exercise and that several streets in Old Headington are on the list for monitoring.

We note that a high profile campaign by the Highfield Residents Association has forced the County Council to allocate resources for a traffic management scheme. Our case is at least as strong! But it is clear that Old Headington residents need to focus more effort on celebrating our streets as valuable social and community spaces. Would you, for example, be interested in organising local activities on Streets for People Day? Would you be prepared to campaign for Old Headington to become a Home Zone? Would you be interested in fundraising?

Finally, we particularly record our thanks to Councillors Ruth Wilkinson and David Rundle for all their help throughout the past year.

Jan Giles, John Rawson, Sally Richards, Ronnie Sonneborn and Tony Fenley.

PLANNING PROCEDURES

Modest improvements proposed to properties in our Conservation Area – Report from the Friends' Planning Strategy Sub-committee:

You may recall that, in 2007, the Secretary of State for Communities (Ruth Kelly) was reported as saying that putting solar panels and wind turbines on houses would no longer need planning permission. In 2008, , further relaxations were announced and reported in the national press as giving property-owners the go-ahead to make modest improvements (such as extensions and dormer windows) without the need to apply for planning permission. In both cases, councils retained the right to restrict planning permission in exceptional circumstances where the benefit was questionable and was outweighed by the impact on the local environment (such as a Listed Building or a Conservation Area).

The committee thought at the time that it would be helpful to draw members' attention to the restrictions potentially applicable to improvements proposed in a Conservation Area, and included an attachment to that effect to the Newsletter issued in November 2008. Some 18 months have passed since that attachment was sent out. With the passage of time, the impact of such comments naturally diminishes. The committee therefore thought that a reminder of the restrictions to general planning policy might now be helpful, so that property owners contemplating a development that they consider "modest, within the meaning of the Act" will not inadvertently go further than the Planning Department will permit within the Old Headington Conservation Area. If in doubt, please contact our Hon. Secretary who will be pleased to seek a view from the committee's architectural adviser, John Rawson.

Adrian Williams, Hugh Ferris, John Rawson

FAIRTRADE SHOP

Many of you will be aware by now that after long negotiations and delays this independent co-operative Fairtrade shop has now opened at 104 London Road under the name *The Windmill*. It sells foodstuffs, confectionery, gifts, cards, and recycled products. There is also a welcome opportunity to refill your Ecover containers.

BURY KNOWLE LIBRARY

Unfortunately there have been considerable delays in building disabled access to the library and we have now heard that the work should start in the middle of August with completion at the end of November.

JACOBS & FIELD

This shop has opened recently as a grocers, delicatessen and coffee house at 15 Old High Street in the premises previously occupied by Threshers. The name of the shop is in celebration of the two gentlemen who were the nurserymen at the market garden which was once where the shop now stands.

The market garden first appeared on records in 1880 and ceased operating in the 1930s when the shop was built, as well as a garage and the electricity substation. The market garden would have extended into the area now occupied by the car park.

CAR PARKING WITHIN RESIDENTS' PARKING ZONES

The contract for monitoring car parking has changed again and it now being handled by NSL. The phone number to call them on for illegal parking in Residents' Parking Zones is 0845 337 1138

HEADINGTON FESTIVAL

This will again be mainly based in Bury Knowle Park and will take place on Sunday, 6th June.

LOCAL CONCERNS

Do please get in touch with the Hon. Secretary or any other member of this committee, about any local concerns you may have, before getting in touch with the City or County Council direct. We have among us many useful contacts within these councils and may be able to help directly rather than for you to go through many hoops to get the help needed. Our City Councillors work hard on our behalf and are readily available to help: their contact details are: Councillor David Rundle, 39 Catherine Street, Oxford OX4 3AH – Tel. 07980 894147 (mobile), email: david.rundle@oxfordlibdems.org.uk; Councillor Ruth Wilkinson, 21 Thames View Road, Rose Hill, Oxford OX4 4TQ – Tel. 07789 368300 (mobile), email: ruth.wilkinson@oxfordlibdems.org.uk