



HRA NEWSLETTER

Highfield Residents' Association

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Autumn 2018

HRA Community Events

Frank McKenna and Patrick Coulter write:

In addition to bringing our community together to have a good time, HRA events have, over the past five years, raised more than £1500 for local charities. Since the last newsletter, we've held two very successful street events though, as last year, under very different weather conditions! On a warm sunny June day we joined once again with All Saints' Church for a day of fun to celebrate our community and to raise funds for the Jo Cox Foundation. By contrast, on the wettest evening in September we held our autumn street meal and cinema evening, warm and snug in the church hall. The autumn/winter programme is set out below. Let us know if you have any suggestions or would like to join us in planning and organising events.

Autumn/Winter Programme

Friday 16th November (7.30pm) **HRA Cinema Evening** in Church House – film title to be announced very shortly.

Friday 7th December (6pm) **Annual Street Carol Singing** featuring a visit from Santa who will leave the reindeer feeding at Shotover and join us to sing around our streets for an hour followed by refreshments (indoors!).

Late January **Music Evening** in Church House – details later.

January and March **Cinema Evening** in Church House – details later.

Early March **Annual Litter Pick** – details later.

Planter boxes on Lime Walk/All Saints' Rd junction

Philip Hunter and Gillian Beeston write:

Thanks to the team of volunteers from the HRA Gardening Group, the bedding plants in the planter boxes at the All Saints' Road/Lime Walk junction have given a spectacular floral display throughout the summer, and are still flowering in October.



Our gratitude goes to all those who regularly kept the plants well-watered throughout this year's sizzling summer heat. We have been asked about the varieties we used and these are: antirrhinum 'Madame Butterfly', cosmos 'Psyche White', cosmos 'Dazzler' and rudbeckia 'Marmalade'.

HRA Cinema Evening

FMck/PC

Encouraged by the current renaissance in Community Cinema we plan to hold regular cinema evenings in All Saints' Church House. The aim is to show interesting films in a social context with drinks and refreshments. To do so we need a licence from the film distributors at a cost of around £80 per film which we recover with a modest admission charge. Our first cinema evening last February was very successful; our next will be on 16th November and then in January and March next year. We do hope you will support this new venture. Suggestions for future film titles are welcome.

Community Project For Highfield: Update

The HRA Community Fund of £9,000, donated by Vital Energi, is held in trust by Headington Action to be spent on community projects in Highfield. Having canvassed members for their views, the main options are: measures to reduce traffic speeds, including buildouts with planters, signage and the like; improving the street scene at the Lime Walk/ All Saints' Road junction and creating a community space in the area next to All Saints' Road where the telephone box used to stand; planting more street trees. We are currently seeking the assistance of staff and students at Brookes University to produce some outline designs for schemes to deliver these options. When these designs are available we will arrange an exhibition and meeting to discuss them with the community, hopefully in early 2019.

FMck/PC

Local Green Spaces *Philip Hunter writes about the Oxford Conservation Volunteers*

I've been involved for some years now with the **Oxford Conservation Volunteers (OCV)**. We take on all sorts of countryside conservation work for all sorts of clients, and we've been closely involved in the preservation and management of two special and secluded sites of wild-life habitat, both of them a few minutes' walk from Highfield, that have recently seen significant changes: Stansfeld Park and Lye Valley.

Stansfeld Park is off Quarry Road. The site is being transformed into an innovation and education centre by The Oxford Trust. The plans include an 'urban wildspace': a mosaic of different habitats (woodland, pond, marsh, and grassland) as the outdoor component of an indoor-outdoor science education centre specifically for primary-aged children, their teachers and parents. The Trust has partnered with OCV and we've been leading work parties there as the development has progressed. There is no public access at the moment, so if you want to have a look, or, better, get involved, keep an eye on the OCV task diary!

Lye Valley is an Oxford City Council site. You can get to the north fen by public footpath off The Slade (between Girdlestone Road and Peat Moors). OCV



have been working here since the 1980s but the site has recently been adopted in BBOWT's 'Wild Oxford' project with outstanding success. Lye valley is a rare environment: a wet area, fed by lime-rich springs along the valley walls, making it technically a 'calcareous fen'. It is home to many unusual plants that

are adapted to this environment, including the marsh helleborine, an orchid which flourishes here, and grass of Parnassus, a very rare species in this part of the UK. It's vital to maintain two things: wetness and biodiversity. A crucial means to both these ends involves a bi-annual cut and clearance of the reeds and sedge that would otherwise dominate the site. If ever there was a case of many hands making light work, then this is it! **If you'd like to lend a hand you'll be very welcome when we next work here: Sunday October 14th on the south fen and Sunday October 21st on the north fen.**

More information:

OCV organizes conservation work parties in and around Oxford every Sunday:

<https://www.ocv.org.uk/events.php>.

The Friends of Lye Valley organize regular mid-week work parties and have an excellent website including maps and photos:

<http://www.friendsoflyevalley.org.uk>.

See the **Oxford Trust** website for Stansfeld Park:

<http://theoxfordtrust.co.uk/our-work/stansfeld-park/>.

You'll find their biodiversity management plan for the woodland area here.

For the **BBOWT** (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) Wild Oxford project see their website:

<https://www.bbowt.org.uk/wildlife/living-landscapes/wild-oxford>

Dead Trees in Highfield

Not all the trees on our streets are as good as the one described on the opposite page. Some are dead, some dying, and in one case so long dead it's totally missing! This is particularly so at the bottom end of Stapleton Rd, and there's also a very sick tree in Bickerton Rd.

The City Council should replace these trees. However, we all know that they really are badly impacted by cuts, and if we leave it to them it won't happen for ages, if ever. Should the HRA press for funds from other sources to be used, such as from developer contributions? This would let the Council off their obligations, but might be more realistic. What do you think? If you have opinions on this, please email:

hracttee@gmail.com

JL

All Saints' Garden

Brigid Crofton writes:

Although the garden belongs to All Saints' Church we hope you feel it is also a green and peaceful community asset. There are 14 borders, 5 lawns and 8 listed lime trees, all of which have been cared for by volunteers for many years, backed up by professionals where necessary.

Highfield Trees *James Larminie writes:*

It is generally assumed that everyone in the HRA loves trees! But do we actually take any real interest in them, or know their names? A recent addition to the HRA website, under the 'More' tab on the right, is a list of all the different types of trees in the public spaces in the HRA 'territory'. **There are 29 different types, and that's just on the streets and in public spaces.** If we included front gardens there would be many more.

Some of these trees are very interesting, for example, the graceful **Black Locust** tree at the end of Barrington Close, pictured here, with a Downy Birch to the left, and a pretty hybrid Japanese Maple to the right. It is a member of the Pea family and so fixes nitrogen from the air, thus



fertilizing the soil which means it can grow well even in poor soil. The ridged bark spirals gently up the single trunk, which branches at what seems an aesthetically perfect two metres from the ground. In May or June it has plentiful pea-like white flowers, which are very attractive to bees.

The Black Locust, also called False Acacia, is a native of the eastern USA, and its special properties were instantly recognised by the first European settlers. Among its special properties is that the timber is VERY hard, harder than Oak. It is also very rot-proof in the ground, and it's been described as the "tree that built the USA" - places like Jamestown were built using this timber. It has been grown extensively in Europe since the early 1600s for its grace and beauty, the quality of the timber, and its great value in promoting honey production. In some places, particularly Hungary and Italy, it is the source of the highly prized Acacia Honey.

It has also proved to be a tough street tree, being resistant to modern urban pollution, and is often planted in towns. As well as the magnificent specimen in the picture, there are also examples in Latimer Rd, and in several HRA front gardens.

Environmental issues *Hilary Rollin writes:*

Snow: it is widely believed that if you clear the snow from the pavement in front of your house, and a passer-by slips and sustains an injury, you could be prosecuted. This is not the case. Supposing we get snow this winter, we can make Highfield a safer place if we clear snow off the pavement before it turns to ice.

And now, environmentally-friendly urban transport that reduces the use of the private car. First, the Pickmeup bus designed to get one from A to B within the eastern arc. Most journeys currently cost £2.50, free with a senior bus pass, but your journey must be such that a standard bus service does not cover your precise route. For further information: www.pickmeup.oxfordbus.co.uk info@oxfordbus.co.uk 01865 785400.

There has been much discussion in the press about dockless bikes, a great boon for some, but considered by many to be an eyesore and a hazard when carelessly parked or abandoned. Should you wish to make use of these bikes or to report a 'stray' dockless bike, here are the contact details for the companies concerned:

Ofo (yellow) @ofosupport

Pony bikes (turquoise) 01865 950950

<https://getapony.com>

Mobike (silver, with orange rim to wheels)

<https://mobike.com/uk> support.uk@mobike.com

Incident Book:

Have you recently been aware of anything that impacts on the comfort, appearance, safety or enjoyment of Highfield? If you have reported it to the relevant authority, please let us know too. Not sure who to report it to? Maybe we can make a suggestion. In any case, let HRA know so that we can log it; and the more complete the record, the greater the chances we can bring pressure on the appropriate authorities to remedy matters. What kind of 'incident'? Any crime, petty crime, anti-social behaviour, graffiti, traffic issues, aggressive dogs, car mirrors broken by passing vehicles, blocked roadside drains etc.

Be sure to send us the information for inclusion in the Incident Book, via hracttee@gmail.com, giving date, time, place, nature of the 'incident', and if applicable, the Crime Reference Number.

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