



HRA NEWSLETTER

Highfield Residents' Association

oxfordhighfield.org

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Autumn 2026

STREET PARTY

The HRA Street Party on Saturday 26th September was a great event, with many people enjoying the fantastically sunny weather. A visit from the Slade Fire Engine, arranged by firefighter Bruce Morgan, a Stapleton Road resident, was a great draw for children and adults alike.

An hour of chat over tea on the street was followed by two hours of more refreshment in the church, and a wonderful array of cakes made by residents.



After that a bring-and-share supper back on the street was enjoyed by many people, under a glorious sunset; again there was an impressive variety of food. The evening ended with a showing of the popular film 'Ratatouille' under the stars – an undemanding and very enjoyable tale of hilarious nonsense!

Thanks to Spike Wilson and James Larminie for text and photos.



Community Walk, Sunday 13 September

We had a fun community walk to Slade Camp, in the woodland of Shotover Hill.

Oxford Preservation Trust, as part of the Oxford Open Doors weekend, were hosting an event, which explained the history of the former army training camp, and subsequent community of over 100 families, until its closure in 1971.

We joined an informative and interesting tour of the area, discovering the remains of an army stores building, ablution block, officers' hut and mechanics' workshop. This was only a tiny fraction of what remains unearthed.

While the weather threatened rain, what fell was inconsequential, and didn't in any way hinder the group's enjoyment of the afternoon.

Lucy and Wocky Whitworth

Talking to Tom Bedford

What can you tell us about your early life?

I was born in Manchester, but the family moved to Reading when I was eighteen months old. My mother was an infant school teacher, who had four children, who were quite eclectic in their choice of careers. One brother became an infant school head, another became a composer of classical music, and my sister became a jeweller. I went to a comprehensive school and achieved very average O-levels. My first job was doing a paper round, because I needed the money. My A-levels were good and I then took time out for three years, to work and travel.

I worked for the Post Office delivering mail by bicycle to outlying areas, and got used to shift work and very early starts. Insights into working life included being on picket lines, and seeing the whole of the sorting office night shift being escorted off the premises by the police as a result of consuming whisky stolen from parcels! After eighteen months the Post Office trained me to drive. In one week! The instructor was an alcoholic and after a morning's instruction he would direct us to a pub. He drank beer and I sipped water. In the afternoon he would fall asleep and I was on my own. However, I somehow passed the test. An abiding memory is the morning after the Great Storm of 1987, seeing the destruction across the countryside, as I tried to deliver the post.

I went to Leeds University to study philosophy and got a first-class degree. During the holidays I worked as a labourer for a local builder.

Was there ever a turning point in your life?

Yes. While studying for my finals I suffered neck pain. A flat mate recommended that I should see his father, an osteopath. I had no idea what osteopathy was, but agreed to go. I was so impressed by my treatment that I decided to become an osteopath myself. I went to the European School of Osteopathy in Maidstone, and after four years obtained a BSc. I was lucky enough to share a flat in a sixteenth-century manor, but winters were brutal. I graduated in 1998 and moved to Oxford.

I set up the practice firstly on the Cowley Road, then in St Clements, before buying the current premises at Iffley Turn. I also lectured part time at Oxford Brookes University and served eight years on the regulatory board of the General Osteopathic Council. This gave me valuable insights into patient management.



Tell us a bit about your interest in birds.

According to my mother, my first word was 'bird'. I'm not sure about the truth of this, but birds have been an interest all my life and a constant source of joy. I go birding in the Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow three or four times a week and am involved with the collection of bird data in Oxfordshire. This interest has taken me all over the world including visiting Marion Island (between South Africa and the Antarctic) to observe the albatross colonies, which have been ravaged by blood-sucking mice. The albatrosses have no defence against the mice, introduced by whaling ships, nor against the cats, introduced to control the mice. It's hoped that the bird populations will be restored following a mouse-eradication programme.

Birding has taken me to Svalbard, China, Australia, Oman and the Straits of Gibraltar to observe bird migration. But sadly, most bird populations are now in decline.

What do you most value in life in

Headington? It's a family-friendly place with good educational opportunities for children; my wife and I love it here. We have green spaces, especially the Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow.

Do you have a favourite author? I don't get much time for reading, but I do enjoy Ian M. Banks's science fiction.

What changes have you seen in Headington?

The green spaces are important, but are under pressure from development. There is a lovely community feel in Headington, especially in Stapleton Road.

Nick Rollins

The Campaign to Save Warneford Meadow



More recent members of the HRA community may be interested to know the exhaustive legal battle fought by local residents to protect the Warneford Meadow from development, save it for community use, and protect this vital part of a city 'green lung'.

HRA residents (and other groups) joined the specially formed **Friends of Warneford Meadow (FoWM)** in a coordinated plan to (a) dismiss the proposed development, and (b) register the meadow as a Town Green – thus preserving it for community use.

Little did we know, when plans for development were submitted early in 2006, the process would take four years of coordinated campaigning and a parallel funding programme to cover £65,000 in fees!

Faced with a barrage of objections from residents, CPRE, our MP, and hosts of interest groups, the city planners failed to determine the plans and the NHS chose not to pursue an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate while the Town Green application was proceeding.

The NHS objected to the application and so the **Warneford Meadow Town Green Public Inquiry** started at the Town Hall in October 2007 with evidence presented over 5 days by Trust objectors, 26 residents, and their legal representatives. In October 2008 the Planning Inspector, Mr Vivian Chapman QC, recommended that the site should be registered as a new town or village green under the Commons Registration Act 1965.

Consequently, on 6 April 2009 Oxfordshire County Council Planning & Regulation Committee accepted the Inspector's Report and voted to register Warneford Meadow as a Town Green. However, the NHS then announced that it would seek a judicial review of this decision.

The **Judicial Review** was held in the High Court in February 2010, but on 23 March 2010 it was announced that the Judge **upheld the decision of Oxfordshire County Council to register Warneford Meadow in Oxford as a**

Town Green, and the formal registration took place in May 2010.

Since then, we are all free to enjoy unrestricted access to the Meadow and the orchard with a pledge by the NHS Trust to preserve the Meadow for community use. For more details of where it is, the history, and upcoming events go to <http://www.friendsofwarnefordmeadow.org.uk/>

Harry Edwards

Every picture tells a story

And so does every photo. So

what about these photos? Any ideas? Think



succumbed to the heat and drought.

Back to the first photo, showing Gillian Beeston presiding over a selection (Note: only a selection!) of the seedlings raised from seed planted in the first week of March, and which she ministers to, giving exactly the right amount of water, turning round the seed trays to avoid some seedlings becoming 'leggy' and others stunted, pricking them out to avoid overcrowding, watching for the appropriate moment for 'hardening them off', allowing them to adjust to the outdoor temperature before she and Phil



producing a wonderful, long-lasting display of cosmos, tagetes, and rudbeckia.

will plant them out at just the right moment, after having renewed the compost. Thank you, Gill, for the care you lavish on these plants,

Hilary Rollin

Traffic in Highfield

Those with long memories will remember how HRA have sought for many years for measures to reduce traffic speeds and volumes on Highfield streets. The main problem is the use of our streets as a cut through between London Road and Old Road. We set up a small Traffic Group to lead our campaigns. Perhaps our biggest success was persuading the County Council to provide a reduced width crossing at the All Saints/Lime Walk junction. Our recent survey shows that over 65 percent of vehicles on Lime Walk/Stapleton Road exceed the 20mph limit. In response we're at present negotiating with our local County and City Councils to provide a mobile light-up speed warning sign. HRA would buy the sign and the local authorities would manage it. Members may also be aware of the current County Council consultation to review/revise our on-street parking. We have asked the Council to plan the new scheme so as to encourage traffic to slow down through a staggered parking arrangement. The present restriction on Saturday afternoon parking is a hangover from the Manor football ground days and will be removed.

If you'd like to join the Traffic Group and help us improve our local street environment please get in touch.

*Patrick Coulter & Frank McKenna
for the HRA Traffic Group*

Events in Highfield

People's Emergency Briefing – Friday
16th October 7.30pm in All Saints' Church. This is a 50-minute film exploring the impacts of the climate and nature crisis on UK society. The aim is to stimulate collective action. Not to be missed. There will be an opportunity to discuss the issues after the showing.

HRA Film Night in early November – date to be confirmed. We're showing the classic comedy *The Ladykillers* (1955). Hailed by the *Guardian* as 'perhaps the greatest British comedy of all time'. It's brilliant!

Street Carol Singing – Saturday 12th
December. Meet 6pm at the All Saints' Road notice board. Singing carols around Highfield with Father Christmas joining in, followed by refreshments in All Saints' Church. A great start to the Festive Season!

New Year Ceilidh – Saturday 2nd January
7.30pm in All Saints' Church. The band comprises current and former Cheney pupils. The church is a good venue with an excellent dancing surface. Come with family and friends for a grand night!

Do keep in touch with our events programme through our excellent website.

The Events Group

Treasurer's Report

A huge thank you to all our wonderful Street Reps who have been out collecting subs or reminding members how to pay these directly into the HRA Bank Account.

A big thank you too to those of you who have paid this year's sub of £5.00.

If this reminds you that you have yet to pay, don't worry it's never too late! At this stage it's probably easiest for you to pay directly into the HRA account and I will let your street rep know.

Details are;

Payee Name: *Highfield Residents'
Association*

Sort Code: *30-96-96*

Account Number: *77892468*

Please put your House Number and Street as Reference

Uncertain if you have paid? Just email me and I will let you know!

Chris Dinsdale treasurer@oxfordhighfield.org

Useful contacts: oxfordhighfield.org/contacts will give you most local contacts you need:

- **HRA Contacts** for Committee Members and Street Reps
- **Other Contacts** for Local Politicians, Councils, Police and Oxford Brookes
- **Local Links** for other useful organisations in the Headington area