

**For residents of
Oxhey Village**

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Ant Cottee



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Summer newsletter 2024

In this issue:

Welcome to
our new look
newsletter

Oxhey Village
Summer
Fayre 2024

Golden
anniversary
picnic

www.oveg.org

Editorial

By **Ben Atkins**, Chair

Welcome to the new look summer edition which is courtesy of our newest volunteer and community superstar graphic designer Ant Cottee, based in Oxhey.

Ant is taking over from Rae Hobden who has done an incredible job over the past few years in creating a compelling and attractive newsletter. Welcome Ant and thank you Rae! **Read more about the new look in Rob's article.**

As always, the summer months have been busy for OVEG... there was the fayre of course and the more recent **Picnic on the Green** – you can read more about these later in this edition, but I'd like to thank all the volunteers who make these events happen. We're nothing without you and we're incredibly grateful to you all.

On the topic of volunteers, we're always in need of hands to help at events – from setup to helping run the inflatables, Pimm's tent, dog show registration and membership, to name a few examples.

2024 is also **OVEG's 50th year** – to celebrate we were pleased to use the Picnic as an opportunity to take a photo of past and present committee members, volunteers and friends – see if you can name all the faces! I've also shared some thoughts about our anniversary on page 17.

OVEG is a membership organisation with your subscriptions helping to fund all the activities and initiatives we run. Even in these times of hardship, it still represents great value and, of course, all the money goes back into our community.

Please help grow our membership by telling your friends and neighbours about us. They can sign up at **www.oveg.org**. With your support, OVEG will still be here in another 50 years.

Enjoy the rest of your summer and enjoy this newsletter.

Welcome to our new look newsletter

By **Rob Kirby**, Publicity Officer and Deputy Chair

OVEG turns the ripe old age of 50 this year. So what better time to give our member communications a little refresh.

That's why you might notice that the newsletter has a new look and feel. We've also moved to a smaller format, which makes it easier to squeeze onto your coffee table or slide into your bag for some light train reading. As a bonus, A5 fits more easily through letter boxes, which will delight our volunteer newsletter deliverers.

The refreshed newsletter is all thanks to Ant Cottee, an Oxhey Village-based graphic designer, and co-owner of Watford business Penknife Design. We're very grateful for the time he has put into this fabulous latest edition.

You might also be interested to hear that, thanks to some technical tinkering behind the scenes on our membership database, we're getting ready to land the very first OVEG e-newsletter directly into members' inboxes. Not yet a member? Get in touch and we'll be delighted to arrange that for you.

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Shirena Counter
Environment Officer



OVEG's 50th birthday

By Ben Atkins, Chair

This year marks 50 years since the Oxhey Village Environment Group (OVEG) was founded; a fantastic milestone in any organisation's history.

I have lived in Oxhey my whole life (apart from a couple of years in London while at university) and have always credited OVEG with being part of the reason that Oxhey feels like such a special place to live in. (I should say of course that there are many groups and individuals who

also work hard in our community but are far too numerous to mention here.)

We organise events and work with various other local stakeholders to make improvements in the area – the war memorial on the Village Green, the village noticeboards, the defibrillators at points around the village are just a few examples. We are formed from a committee of volunteers who want the best for the area we live in and I for one am grateful for OVEG's existence and for the opportunity to work with such committed volunteers.

I sometimes describe OVEG to friends or colleagues by telling them that it's not an organisation that is going to change the world, but it is one which works hard to protect its part of it.

From Bunny Hensby and the founding members and all the committee members past and present, I am incredibly thankful for all the time and effort you have put in. I asked ChatGPT – an Artificial Intelligence [AI] engine – to summarise OVEG's last 50 years and although some of what it gave me wasn't accurate (I don't think the robots are going to take over just yet!) the closing paragraph made me proud. It's more grandiose than I would write myself, but I recognise the sentiment and very much hope you do too...

"The success of OVEG is a testament to the dedication of its volunteers and the strength of the community it serves. As the group celebrates its 50th anniversary, it remains a dynamic force in Oxhey Village, committed to environmental stewardship, heritage preservation, and local engagement. OVEG's efforts over the past five decades have left a lasting impact, ensuring that Oxhey Village remains a cherished home for future generations."

Happy Birthday OVEG!

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10.00am Sung Eucharist
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Thurs 10.00am Said Eucharist except 1st week
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visit our website: www.stmatthewsoxhey.org.uk
where you can join our mailing list for weekly updates
or follow us on social media



Oxhey Climate Café update

By **Shirena Counter**,
OVEG Environment Officer

The first series of four 1-hour climate cafés, supported by OVEG and held at the Oxhey Bowls, club kicked off in March, running until mid-June (with an extra, informal session in July at the request of participants).

At the first café session we split into two break-out groups and ended up with two small projects – **Oxhey Swapsey** and **Oxhey Green Uncut**.

Despite a change of dates because people felt that the original dates were too far apart and there was a loss of momentum, the cafés were well attended. What people said they enjoyed most was making new connections with others living locally and the focus on action.

As a direct result of the new connections, Refillabell also hosted its first “clothes swap” session which was a great success!

We are planning to run another climate café series starting in September. We have also set up a Climate Café Facebook group which anyone is welcome to join (www.facebook.com/groups/1089391542306958).

Oxhey Swapsey

The purpose of Oxhey Swapsey is to encourage residents to recycle their household items rather than throwing them away and ending up as landfill. On the first Saturday of each month, between 9am – 12pm you can rehome your usable but unwanted items that are too good for the tip or charity shop by placing them outside your house. There is also a poster you can display in your window a few days before to let people know you will be putting out items or you can post on the Oxhey Village Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/829937234024422).

Each month has a different theme, linked with the time of year, such as suitable Christmas gift items for December, and residents are asked to remove any items that have not been collected by 12pm and recycle them.

For useful recycling suggestions for lots of different items, or to download the window poster, please visit the OVEG environment subgroup page on the OVEG website on: www.oveg.org

Oxhey Green Uncut group

The second Climate Café project group focused on supporting our pollinators (not just bees) by asking Watford Council to leave some areas of Oxhey Green uncut.

A map showing the proposed areas is below.

We are also setting up a volunteer gardening group to improve the areas around the noticeboards. If you have any questions or comments, or would like more information, please email me at shirena.counter@oveg.org





Oxhey Village Summer Fayre 2024

By **Paul Hudson**, Fayre Coordinator

The Fayre for OVEG's 50th Anniversary year began rather inauspiciously with drizzle; however, this soon cleared and we had a cloudy day with some lovely sunny intervals.

As usual the Glen Trew Pipe Band opened things up to get everyone's attention for Watford Mayor, Peter Taylor to formally open the Fayre. The Pump House children and Youth Theatre performed excerpts from their latest performance of "Shrek the Musical JR" followed by the Year 2 children from Bushey and Oxhey

infant school performing traditional country dancing. Both performances attracted large crowds around the central arena, bolstered I'm sure by many proud parents.

The upside of the slightly un-June-like weather was that we were able to hold our Dog Show without last year's worry about cancellation due to the heat. I don't know if it was because everybody missed out last year but there seemed to be an awful lot of dogs at the Fayre this year, many of them looking quite salon-fresh. I'm told this was one of our biggest Dog Shows ever, and judging by the number of spectators crammed around the arena, I am not surprised.

There was a lovely variety of stalls this year. One of my favourites was seeing the Uxbridge fundraisers being pelted with Custard Pies whilst raising money for the Wish Centre in Harrow. We had new providers for the inflatables this year which seemed to be successful and we also had a visit from the Fire Engine. The OVEG tombola sold out yet again and we saw the return of our OVEG Environment stall with suggestions on how we can make easy changes that have a positive impact on our environment.

Bushey Baptist Church did a roaring trade in the Tea tent and Tonino's ice cream van had queues trailing around the green. Whilst it wasn't especially Pimm's weather, there were plenty of those sold too.

Proceedings moved onto the controlled chaos that is the children's races, with all participants getting an OVEG medal and finally the drawing of the Raffle.

A number of people told me they felt this was one of the busiest Fayres they had seen. I'm not sure if it was due to anticipation around the Dog Show, the milder weather or something else. What I do know is that I'm very lucky to live in such a wonderful community that supports our events every year.

Thank you again to everyone involved including the stallholders, volunteers, the Committee and everyone who turned out to support the Fayre.

I hope to see you all next year.





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BUSHEY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

The Museum tells the story of Bushey and its unique artistic history. It has a large collection of works and articles relating to Sir Hubert von Herkomer RA and his world-renowned Art School. Also on show is the Lucy Kemp-Welch Memorial Trust Collection, including many of Lucy's superb paintings of horses.

Bushey's social history is shown through displays on life in the village both in time of peace and war, some of the many locally made products and historic maps.

There is an on-going programme of changing exhibitions throughout the year.

Open Thursdays to Sundays 11am - 4pm
ADMISSION FREE

Rudolph Road, Bushey WD23 3HW
Tel 020 8420 4057
www.busheymuseum.org



Trees – who needs them?

By **Shirena Counter**, OVEG Environment Officer

Trees are amazing. Did you know that an individual tree can remove up to 1.7kilograms (just over 3½ lbs) of dust and air pollutants in a year? That's just one of the benefits of having trees in our area.

Tree canopies act as a physical filter, trapping dust and absorbing pollutant gases like nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, ammonia, and ozone from the air. They filter out particulates which are then trapped in their bark and leaves and can reduce pollution levels by up to 50%. Research has shown they protect people living in urban areas from pollution-related sickness and deaths and there is even some evidence that children living in areas with more street trees have a lower incidence of asthma.

Physical benefits

Most of us are probably aware of the physical benefits of trees in providing shade and shelter from the elements. During summer, shade from tree canopies can reduce UV exposure by up to 50% compared to direct sunlight. Trees also act as natural air conditioners, keeping humans and buildings cooler by reflecting heat upwards from their leaves. It's estimated that trees can reduce the temperature in a city by as much as 7°C.

Other benefits from trees include the prevention of soil erosion, the lowering of wind speeds and reduction of noise from traffic and at least 20 British tree species have medicinal properties (for example birch bark oil is antiseptic).

Helping the fight against climate change and biodiversity loss

Trees benefit the environment by preventing carbon from being released into the atmosphere and helping the fight against global warming as they act as a “carbon sink”, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide as they grow and producing oxygen. Scientists have recently discovered that microbes hidden within tree bark can absorb methane (a greenhouse gas which has a far bigger impact on global warming than carbon dioxide) from the atmosphere.

Trees also provide habitats and food for wildlife such as moths, birds, bats, owls, dormice, butterflies, beetles, lichen and fungi, which all depend on them to thrive. One mature oak can be home to as many as 500 different species.

Reducing the risk of flooding

Trees reduce the risk of flooding in several ways. Firstly, the leaves of mature trees intercept rain before it reaches the ground. The roots make the soil more porous so that water is sinks more quickly into the ground and their root networks then act as a sponge to hold and store water.

Finally, they transpire (absorb water through their roots and transfer it to the leaves, where it then evaporates into the air through leaf pores). They also improve water quality by holding onto waterborne pollutants that would otherwise run off into watercourses.

Trees near lakes or rivers can be useful flood defences as they reduce the amount of rainwater entering watercourses, which lowers the likelihood of a river bursting its banks and flooding the surrounding areas.

However, trees also help us in other, more surprising ways.

Benefits to our physical health

Research shows that within minutes of being surrounded by trees and green space, your blood pressure drops, your heart rate slows, and your stress levels come down.

Other studies have shown that patients who had a view of trees in hospital after surgery recovered faster, used fewer pain medications, and left hospital sooner. Access to green space and trees may even have a positive effect on infant birth weight for mothers in lower socioeconomic groups.

Benefits to our mental health

Trees can reduce anxiety and depression and a UK study showed that visiting woodlands could potentially save the NHS approximately £185 million in annual treatment costs for mental health conditions. It's thought that this is because trees release phytoncides (naturally occurring chemicals like pheromones) that have been shown to both reduce stress and boost immune function in humans that spend time in woodland.

People living in buildings near grass and trees showed greater resilience to major life events and trees reduce mental fatigue among people who live within sight of them.

Benefits to the economy

There is evidence that consumers spend more on streets that are lined with large trees and that average house prices are higher, and properties sell faster if they are close to mature large species trees.

Companies benefit from a healthier, happier and more productive workforce if there are parks and trees nearby and there is even evidence that employees with views of trees and landscapes take an average of 11 hours less sick leave per year than those who don't.

Crime prevention

A US study found that the higher the number of trees in a neighbourhood, the lower the crime rate (for both violent and property crimes). It was suggested this could be for various reasons, such as signalling to potential criminals that residents care about their neighbourhood and are on the lookout, or that trees can reduce levels of aggression due to mental fatigue.

Finally....

Climate change, wildlife loss and pollution are already affecting the UK and trees are a key part of the solution. The UK has a much lower tree coverage than the rest of Europe (around 13%) and needs to increase its tree cover to 19% by planting an additional 1.5 million hectares of additional woodland by 2050 to meet its carbon neutral target. If we miss that target, the impact could be irreversible.

It's our mature trees, especially the large species such as oak, chestnut or beech trees, which give us the greatest benefits and planting multiple new trees doesn't come close to offsetting the negative impact of the loss of a mature one. It can take many years for new trees to replace those lost benefits and we should be fighting to keep trees at all costs, not chopping them down.



Oxhey Open Gardens 2024

By **Julie and Linda**, Oxhey Open Gardens committee

On a warm afternoon in late June enthusiastic crowds of local people came along to visit the gardens which were open for the 30th Open Gardens.

This year there were 18 gardens – some exciting new ones plus some old favourites. The two refreshment stops were kept busy serving welcome cups of tea and delicious home-made cakes. There were ice creams in one garden – and you could even make your own pizza in another! There were cuttings and small plants available in several of the gardens.

The Peace Hospice (now Rennie Grove Peace) has confirmed that we **raised an amazing £3,638** (including gift aid) on the day. So, we say a huge thank you to everyone involved, and to all the visitors for their generous donations.

We're always on the look-out for new gardens, so please get in touch if you would like to be involved in this annual community event.

See you again in 2025.

Find out more:
www.oxheyopengardens.co.uk





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Golden anniversary picnic

By **Paul Hudson**, Fayre Coordinator

Thank you from the OVEG Committee to everyone who turned up to help us celebrate our 50th birthday.

Apparently, we had some stern competition from a couple of local school fairs and the Ladies' Wimbledon final, and of course the weather wasn't particularly picnic-friendly. Still, we had plenty of people stop by to say hello. DJ Neil started things off with the music as people arrived and then we had the first hour-long set from the exuberant UkeRythmics Ukelele Band.

Whilst the Uke players had a rest and recuperated with tea and cake, group photographs of various

local volunteers were taken, which was a lovely reminder of all the people who give their time for the community. After the photo session, the UkeRythmics entertained us for another hour. The keen-eared may well have spotted a theme to the backing music playing during the band's cake break and the last half an hour before we closed as all the songs were from 1974, the year OVEG was formed.

The UkeRythmics asked for a donation to be sent to Brain Tumour Research.

The photographs were kindly taken by Chloé Thompson from MilkChic Creative (@milkchiccreative on Instagram).

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Thank you, Village Kitchen

By **Rob Kirby**, Publicity Officer and Deputy Chair

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**If you've eaten at the Rifle
Volunteer or the Villiers Arms
in recent years, the chances
are that you've been fed by
The Village Kitchen, a.k.a the
Dronsfield family.**

Sam and Craig have been serving up
curries, pies and pizzas to the village
for more than 12 years. However,
due to ongoing health issues, they
have reluctantly decided to hang
up their spatulas. The OVEG team
would like to say a huge thank you to

Sam and Craig, and everyone at the
Village Kitchen, for their friendship
and support over the years.

Judging by the comments online, it's
clear that their cuisine will be sorely
missed by the community. The good
news is they'll still be very much
round and about... just without the
aprons. Sam and Craig decided to
bow out in style, with a 'last hoorah'
at the Villiers Arms on 31st August.
We're certainly looking forward to
tucking into a slice of their 'jiko'
pizza, one final time.



Upcoming events

Big Breakfast
19th October 2024

**Remembrance Walk
and Service**
10th November 2024

Contributing to the OVEG newsletter

The deadline for news, items, stories, announcements and adverts for the next issue is the last week of September 2024, content subject to available space.

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