



Waterways
Management Company



GreenSquareAccord

Spring 2024 Newsletter

Coming very soon to the Waterways ...

SUNDAY 31 MARCH

EASTER EGG HUNT



When? **10am**

... don't be late!

Where? On the **Green**

Who? **Kids** aged 10'ish

... or younger

Future Events

Would anyone in the Waterways like to organise an event on or around the end of summer school term , in June or in early September? The Waterways Residents Association (WRA) are looking for ideas and volunteers to run such events. The WRA can help with Costs and Infrastructure (marquees, barbecues, gazebos, tables, chairs, lights, etc.).

The current team have been organising events for more than 12 years now, and we still feel that there must be younger people and fresh ideas to bring new energy to the summer (and winter) events.

Please do get in touch if you are willing and able to provide ideas and/or leadership and we will support you. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you. Please contact wrachair@gmail.com.

Saturday, 2nd March 2024: Litter Picking

This year's first Litter Picking campaign was again a big success. 8 local volunteers joined in the effort. At least the rain held off for most of the session. Big Thanks to everyone!



Feature: Wildlife in the Waterways

Waterways Native trees

The first of a series of articles about the native trees that enrich our neighbourhood.

Silver Birch - *Betula pendula*

These slender, graceful trees can be seen all around the Waterways, recognisable for their white peeling bark and delicate leaves. Our examples are just now growing tall enough to be really noticeable. They are fast-growing, short-lived native trees so they will soon need to be replaced. Their wide-spreading shallow root system makes them resilient but in a managed landscape their lifespan is often less than 30 years.

They can occasionally reach 30m but their light feathery canopy means they don't cast the heavy shade of other forest trees so they are popular with gardeners and landscapers. They don't have heavy branches to drop and they support far more wildlife than one might expect. Blue tits rely on birch caterpillars to feed their young and birches provide food and habitat for more than 300 other insect species and then food for the birds that eat the insects. Siskins, greenfinches and redpolls eat the seeds from the delicate summer birch catkins.

However tempting, we must resist peeling the bark from our Birch trees. All our beautiful native trees are living in a stressful city environment, with compacted soil, tarmac and reflected heat from buildings. They are hardier than ornamental species, but still need our care.

Watch out for the Birch trees as you walk around the Waterways - they are truly lovely when their pale green leaves appear in spring. *Wendy Stone*

Christmas Party Night WRA Year-End/Christmas Party

The earlier start for this years event meant that it was not so cold and frosty a winter evening but that did not affect the festive spirit at our annual Christmas Hog Roast. We would like to thank all that turned out and for all the hard work from everyone beforehand, especially the children's choir. Thanks also to the parents for supporting this and the children during rehearsals and at the event.



The arrival of Father Christmas (above) on his canal boat in a blaze of lights, to be greeted by the cheers of kids big and small, was of course one of the highlight of the evening.



Thanks to the Oxford City Silver Band, for turning out on the freezing night and entertaining everyone with festive tunes. And to everyone involved in making and serving delicious food and drink: mulled wine and hog roast, tea, coffee and hot chocolate, and homemade pancakes. And of course to the armies of volunteers who helped set up and clean up on the day. And finally, to the WRA team who bring it all together – **Big Thanks** to everyone!



Waterways
Management
Company

Chair's Update

The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Waterways Management Company was held this February at the Baptist Church on the Woodstock Road. We were delighted that four new directors joined the committee on that occasion. The extent of WMC's work must have been obvious to those attending and we would like to encourage one other person to join us as directors and help make decisions critical to our life on The Waterways.

A number of issues were raised and discussed.

1. The noticeboard that was originally installed under the arches in Complins Close is so hidden away few people are aware of its existence, so a new board will be positioned beside the Green.

2. The original avenue of alder trees in Frenchay Road grew so fast and their roots caused so much damage to the pavements and car park areas that they are gradually being replaced with pyrus chanticleer, or ornamental pears trees, as is their common name. There are now more of this species along the road than alders, so the avenue of these ornamental pear trees on Frenchay Road will eventually look as glorious as the line down Elizabeth Jennings Way. The two tulip trees beside the cycle racks on the Green will be removed following the advice of the Oxford City Tree Officer and will be replaced with more suitable trees. The line of seven lime trees, also known as linden trees, will remain. In future trees more suited to the estate conditions, for example with deeper roots will be planted to replace all those that we have had to removed or we have lost.

3. Unfortunately, considerable damage was caused by this winter's storms. High levels of rainfall have softened the ground and four trees with relatively shallow roots could not withstand the high winds and fell. This could have caused a great deal of damage, but thanks to the swift action of our gardeners Evergreen, the pathways and canal tow-path were quickly cleared. One tree did fall into a private garden, but again luckily the damage was less that it might have been.

4. A non-native green pond weed is growing in the water of the wildlife corridor. Groups of Friends of the Trap Grounds and residents of The Waterways are taking it in turns to rake this weed out onto the bank so that it doesn't become too established.

5. The programme of lift modernisation is continuing. Work has now been completed on two apartment blocks and other blocks will follow as finances on other blocks allow.

6. Extensive research has been carried out on the introduction of Electric Vehicle Charging on The Waterways, but this has stalled for the moment as the full complications of the many issues became clearer. If there are one or two people who would like to take up this work in finding a way forward they should contact a member of the committee.

7. Two new benches will be installed this spring. One, like those in the Trap Grounds, will be placed on the slope on Elizabeth Jennings Way to allow residents walking up and down to Summertown a place to sit and take a welcome rest.

The other bench will be placed on the wildlife corridor in memory of Adrian Olsen who was so highly regarded as Chair of the Waterways Management Company. He loved our gardens and especially the Catalpa tree, or Indian Bean tree, in Stone Meadow and the fritillaries and cowslips in springtime, so residents will also be able to sit and enjoy that special view. At Easter you will be able to see the beautiful purple and white Fritillaria Meleagris in the wildlife corridor beside the children's playground. Look but don't touch!

The WMC will be re-organising our website and updating our communications soon.



Communication with FirstPort

Please note that you can report issues directly to our FirstPort Property Managers via the dedicated email address The.Waterways@FirstPort.co.uk, without having to go via the general reporting process. FirstPort have allocated a Customer Services Specialist to us to keep an eye on our email and other communications that go to Customer Services to ensure they are dealt with promptly.

New Neighbours

If you know of new neighbours moving onto the estate, do let me or any other WMC director know the address so we can deliver a "Welcome to the Waterways" booklet.

Local Information e-Mail List

If you would like to join the e mail list to receive occasional updates of local interest, such as meetings or events, and Thames Valley Police reports of local incidents, please send your details to the email address below.

Louise Robertson

Chair, Waterways Management Company

chair.wmc@gmail.com

WRA Saturday Foodbank Collections

Cherwell Larder in Kidlington is continuing to support vulnerable local families. Contributions of household cleaning and laundry products, personal care and baby items, and non-perishable food supplies from our neighbourhood make a huge difference to their clients. We collect donations on Saturday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30 on the car park next to the Frenchay Road Green, so do come to say hello.

Cherwell Larder: Friends Feeding Friends



We are a non means-tested service providing food and other essentials to our community. Our volunteers and delivery drivers are also users, building solidarity and sustainability of the larder long-term.

1000 people have used the larder, of which most are children. We service the medically vulnerable and shielding, people passionate about food waste, those facing financial hardships due to COVID, families, and single older adults.



The WRA Community Room (a.k.a. 'Room 51'):

'Room 51' is a Community-Owned Event Space available for short-term hire. It is located above the Nursery in 51 Clearwater Place.

It's a warm, carpeted space, seats up to 30, has kitchen and bathroom facilities, a projector and screen, lift and disabled access. It's suitable for **meetings** and **events** of many kinds, e.g. **classes, children's parties, reading or study groups, or as a space for rehearsals or consultations ...**

The room is available to residents for £6 per hour during the day, and £11 per hour in the evenings and at weekends. It is currently used regularly for music lessons, meetings, and break-out space for home-working.

Book Your Space ...

via e-mail: WRARoom51@thewaterways.co.uk
or online: room51.thewaterways.co.uk/booking-form

The WRA: About Us ...

Waterways Residents Association (WRA) is a registered not for profit Community Interest Company (CIC), managed and run by **unpaid volunteers (contact us if you would like to join!)**, representing all 500+ Waterways households.

WRA organise regular community events, including the annual **Summer BBQ, Christmas/Year-End Party, Easter Egg Hunt**, and multiple **Litter Picking** campaigns each year. **Suggestions for other events are welcome!**

We also maintain the **WRA Community Space** (see above), which is collectively owned by the community of residents. Rental income is a vital part of WRA funding.

Our activities are funded by grants, donations, and rental income. Financial support from **GreenSquareAccord Group**, the **Waterways Management Company**, and **Oxford City Council** is gratefully acknowledged.

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Sharon Grisbroke, Raquel Stremme, Diane Wilson, and many more neighbours help with event planning and execution, coordination and communication.

thewaterways.co.uk/about-the-waterways/wra



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