

**For residents of
Oxhey Village**

Cover photo by
Ant Cottee



Free for
members

**Join OVEG
today!**

A photograph of a robin perched on a dark, textured branch. The robin has a bright orange-red breast and throat, a greyish-blue head, and brown wings and back. It is facing right. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

Spring newsletter 2025

In this issue:

Thank you,
your majesty

Jazz Steps
is back!

Book your stall at
the OVEG Fayre

www.oveg.org

Editorial

By **Ben Atkins**, Chair

Hello all!

Welcome to our spring newsletter. I hope you'll agree it's another excellent edition and my thanks, as always, go to Shirena and to Ant who collate the content and do an excellent job of bringing it together in such an attractive layout.

By the time you read this, we will have hosted the annual OVEG Social and AGM. I will write more about this in the next issue, but expect updates to the constitution (the previous update was in 2016!), new committee members, and plans for another year of community events.

I'm pleased to say OVEG membership numbers have continued to grow in recent months. That's partly owing to our new membership database which does much of the leg work on our behalf! But it's also due renewed memberships from long term residents, as well as fresh interest from new faces in the village; we're always delighted to see new neighbours taking a keen interest in the area.

As a membership organisation with no external funding, we rely heavily on subscriptions to continue our work. That's why I would be grateful if you could take every opportunity to talk to friends and neighbours about OVEG. Not only do we have a 50-year history of advocating for Oxhey Village, we host events that bring the community together and raise money to support and enhance our area. My thanks go to Rob, Paul and Michelle on the committee for their focus on membership.

Finally, it's good to see our environmental agenda progress and I'm looking forward to seeing what the no-mow areas bring on the Village green in the spring and summer months (although I'm told it may take a few years for them to fully establish). I'm keen to see what more we can do as an organisation, and as a community, to support sustainability and biodiversity.

As always – if you have anything you think OVEG could be doing, please do get in touch on chair@oveg.org

Thank you and enjoy the issue.



Wassailing

By **Julie Bowtell**, title. Photo by **Deb Littlely**

On a cold, cold evening in early January about a hundred local people gathered at Oxhey Orchard on Paddock Road allotments to celebrate the New Year and to take part in wassailing the many fruit trees there.

Wassailing has become an annual, and eagerly anticipated, neighbourhood event since the community orchard was planted 25 years ago. This may be because everyone loves the delicious hot mulled cider, together with the magic and warmth from the huge bonfire.

Wassailing is an Old English tradition celebrated around the country in a range of different ways, but always seeming to include some music and singing, with an emphasis on wishing each other good health

(hence the cider!), and aiming to ensure a good fruit harvest in the future by blessing the trees in the orchard.

Our version is similar and we ask children to place a slice of apple cake into the branches of our guardian tree to attract birds to eat the pests and bugs, and sprinkle cider onto the tree roots to symbolise nourishment. We sing a popular wassailing song, and a wassailing poem finishes the ceremony with the final sentence acting as a toast. This is followed by us all making a huge noise to discourage pests and to wake the sleeping trees back to life.

We must credit and thank Mary Reid for establishing the orchard and the tradition of wassailing in Oxhey. If you haven't been before then please look out for details of next year's event, usually on the first Saturday after Twelfth Night, and come along to wassail at Oxhey Community Orchard.



Jazz Steps is back!

By **Chris Newstead**, Chair

The Watford Jazz Junction Festival is back for a fourth year, running from 10th - 18th May and attracting some incredible musicians, including Grammy award-winning saxophonist Tim Garland, Soul diva Vanessa Haynes, and Blues legend Errol Linton.

And that also means Jazz Steps is back too for our final day on Sunday 18th May.

We'd love you to join us for what is always a family-friendly and fun afternoon of free live music exclusively in Oxhey Village. We hope to be at all 6 of our local pubs and Oxhey Bowls Club and, new for this year, we'll also be in St Matthews Church Hall with big bands and a dance tutor. We'll also be moving our large stage to Oxhey Green from Watford Heath to give us more wiggle room and space for dancing.

The general idea of Jazz Steps is to walk, talk, meet, drink, eat, socialise, and hear some amazing live music.

We'll have around 30 acts, including grassroots & local artists performing in multiple styles (Ska, Blues, Funk, Bebop, Nu-jazz and more) as well as professionals including the **Ten Bells Rag Band**, saxophonist **Tony Kofi**, and a closing show from the **City Funk Orchestra** featuring singers Imaani and Mary Pearce.

This year we'll also be creating a Watford Community Space on Oxhey Green. There'll be a focus on health and wellbeing, with information about lots of other amazing local charities and community groups working across the town.

You'll find lots of food and drink options on Oxhey Green too, alongside entertainment for young people, pop-up performances (including our very own festival Walkestra) and a special primary schools' performance featuring talented "jazzers" from Bushey Manor and Greenfields Primary (in South Oxhey) where we've been teaching improvisation. We can't wait to hear them!

So, whether you're looking to settle in at one of our participating pubs for the day or move around all our venues, we promise you a super-inclusive and safe event. We'll go ahead whatever the weather, but of course, it will be sunny (words I repeat every night...)

There's no need to buy tickets (because there aren't any!) although we'll have free wrist bands to help you feel part of the event. If you'd like to RSVP by registering for "tickets" on our website that will help us with our planning and there are bonus points for supporting our Crowd Funder (see the link at the top of our site). Jazz Steps isn't cheap to run but we'll do everything we can to keep it free for all.

Tickets for all our festival shows at the Palace Theatre, Halsey Hall and Pump House, and all the information about Jazz Steps (updated until the day itself), are available on our website at

www.watfordjazzjunction.com





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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.

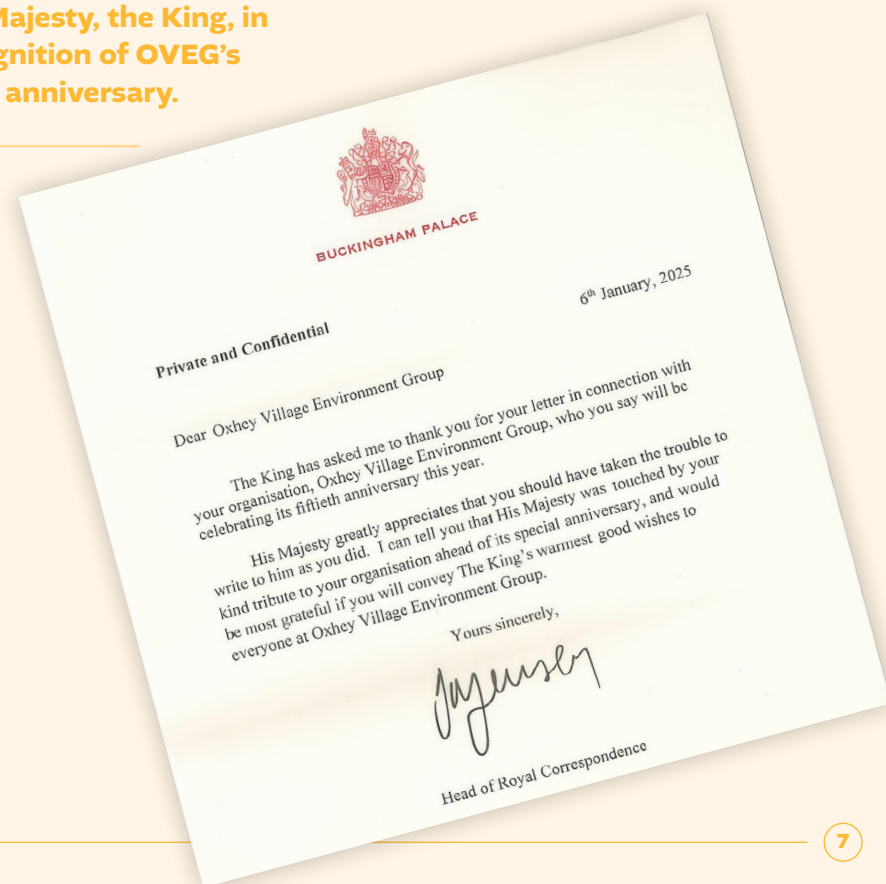
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Thank you, your majesty

Generally speaking, you need to clock up a hundred years on this earth to receive correspondence from Buckingham Palace. So, we were naturally delighted to receive a letter from His Majesty, the King, in recognition of OVEG's 50th anniversary.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members, supporters and volunteers who have contributed so much to our community, and helped keep Oxhey Village a wonderful place to live and work over the last half century





Book your stall at the OVEG Fayre

Are you looking to promote your local business or charity?

Our annual Oxhey Village Fayre on Saturday 7th June routinely has a high footfall, so is an ideal opportunity to showcase products or services to the local community.

We have a limited number of stalls available so if you're interested, please contact **Paul Hudson** at paul.hudson@oveg.org

Prices are as follows:

- Private individuals and small charities – **£20 per pitch** for OVEG members, £25 for non-members
- Small businesses and national charities – **£40 per pitch**
- Commercial pitches (e.g. food stalls, larger businesses) – we ask for 20% of profits made on the day to be donated to OVEG

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Regular Weekly Services and Events

10.00 Sunday

Parish Eucharist followed by refreshments in the hall
All Age Family Eucharist fourth Sunday of the month.

14.30 to 16.30 Thursday Meet

Join us every Thursday in the Church Hall for tea, coffee,
cake,
books to swap, jigsaws board games or simply chat.

10.30 Friday

Said Eucharist.

We are an inclusive church community which is committed to offering a warm and friendly welcome to all. We love having children in church and value their presence.

If you would like to be kept up to date on future events and news from St Matthews, please sign up for our weekly newsletter by emailing newsletter@stmatthewsoxhey.org.uk or visit our website: www.stmatthewsoxhey.org.uk

The Rifle Volunteer: a warm welcome back!

By Steph Thiers-Ratcliffe, OVEG Secretary

After months of anticipation and hard work, The Rifle Volunteer has officially reopened its doors following an extensive renovation.

To cover this exciting event, I volunteered to attend the opening evening, to meet the new landlords and to sample a glass or two of wine (arduous work I know, but somebody had to do it)! I was joined by my friend, Ian Davis, an ale connoisseur, and a long time Oxhey Village resident.

As soon as we opened the door, we noticed the freshly painted walls, the inviting atmosphere, and the updated bar area with warm wood accents; very impressive indeed! We felt that the renovation was designed not just to update the look of the pub but to preserve the sense of history and warmth that made it so special to our village community.

We also loved the fact that the acoustics have been well thought out and that a group can easily watch a football match in one part of the pub, whilst others can have a quiet conversation in another.

Wasting no time, we went to the bar to check what delicacies we could sample and chose a pint of Doom Bar for Ian and a glass of delightful rosé wine from Provence for me. Whilst ordering our drinks, we met Sol (bottom right), the pub's new manager. Sol is certainly not a novice in this business as he has worked at the Victoria and the Royal Oak in the past, so, I am sure that many of you will recognise him and appreciate his professionalism and sunny personality.

Then it was time to meet and interview the new landlords Pete and Paul (top right), your two new friendly Guvnors! We had a great catch up with them and found out more about them and their plans for the pub.

No surprise but they are both Watford FC supporters and, with the pub's annual Sky subscription, we can expect to watch a lot of sport in the pub. However, they both stressed that they do not want to be categorised as a "sports pub", and they want to create "something for everyone." They are particularly keen on making the pub a family-friendly environment (and a dog friendly one too, which was music to my ears).

Pete and Paul are keen to listen to the community and to adapt their offer accordingly. They are thinking of different food options with local providers as well as live music and quiz evenings. They also told us that they were very much looking forward to participating in the Village annual Brewfest!

Ian pronounced the Doom Bar to be very satisfactory and I could not resist asking them about their wine offer, making a plea for them to stock a good Crémant or Cava (and not just Prosecco). Fingers crossed! To my delight, they told me that they were also thinking of organising wine tasting evenings.

The Rifle Volunteer's re-opening has brought much excitement in the community and as it moves forward with its new chapter, we are sure they will continue to be a cherished place. Opening hours will be Monday to Saturday from 12:00 till 23:30 and Sunday from 12:00 till 22:30.



Environment and planning update

By **Shirena Counter**, OVEG Environment Officer

gs8 development in Oxhey Lane

Following our update in the last newsletter on the proposals for the land on Oxhey Lane to be developed for housing, gs8, the contractor/developer held another community workshop in early February. A few of the committee met them to express concerns about the loss of green space and biodiversity. They advised us that the current woodland has been allowed to degrade and is in poor condition so they will be planting semi-mature trees like seminal oaks to replace trees that have to be cut down.

We understand that there will be no more workshops unless the plan changes substantially and gs8 are intending to submit an application in the next 4-6 months. For more information, please contact **info@gs8.london** or **07896 004355**

We are looking for a new Planning Officer to join our friendly committee, so if you would be interested in supporting OVEG to proactively monitor any applications in Oxhey, please contact our chair, **Ben Atkins** at **ben.atkins@oveg.org**

Recycling talk

Following a discussion around the difficulties of recycling certain items, we arranged an evening at the Oxhey Bowls club where we had speakers from Watford Borough Council and Veolia to dispel some common myths!

One of our local residents who had volunteered to investigate the recycling of soft plastics (like cat food pouches or crisp packets) also gave an interesting presentation on his findings.



Bushey station community garden

Although not an OVEG initiative, a Bushey station community garden group has recently been established.

Following negotiations with the Oxhey councillors, Network Rail have given permission to clear a small patch of land between platform 1 and the alleyway to Kingsfield Road to create a community garden.

A small group of volunteers (closely supervised by a robin!) started to help clear the land in preparation for planting in the spring to enhance and support biodiversity and already the area looks tidier. Once the area has been cleared, Oxhey residents will be asked for their thoughts on the potential design.

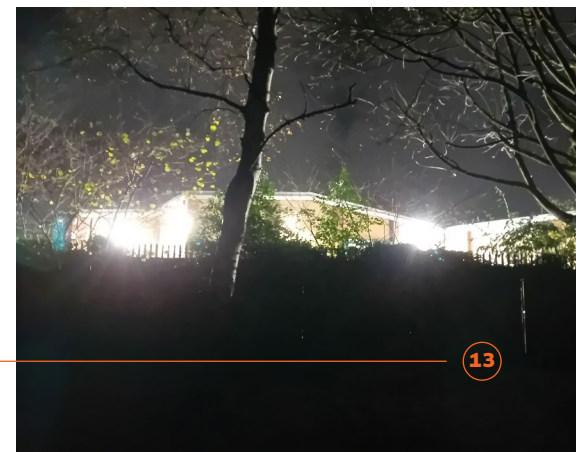
As space is tight, a maximum of five volunteers can be accommodated at any one time but anyone who would like to get involved should email **Shirena Counter** at **shirena13@gmail.com** for more information.

Mercedes garage and light pollution

Sandy Belloni (Friends of Oxhey Park) and Shirena (on behalf of OVEG) met with the Managing Director of the Mercedes garage to ask them whether they could help reduce the light pollution from their security lights, as there are concerns about the negative impact on bats and other wildlife in the park.

As a result, they hired a contractor to try to point the lights downwards but unfortunately this has had little effect on the light pollution and there is still a large amount of glare directly into the park.

We are continuing to work with them to look at other options.





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Oxhey Open Gardens 2025 – an appeal for gardens!

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

**Let's hope that winter is
almost over now and
that spring is just around
the corner.**

As the weather turns warmer, and we start to venture outside again, we're hoping that lots of locals will be keen to join us and open their gardens in the summer.

This year's Oxhey Open Gardens will be in the afternoon of Sunday 22nd June. There's always a fantastic selection of gardens to visit in and around Oxhey Village, so we hope that you might be inspired to join in this year... hopefully in some beautiful summer sunshine!

All gardens are welcome: large or small, courtyard or landscaped,

full of flowers or none. Your garden doesn't need to be pristine or perfect – every garden has something of interest.

Oxhey Open Gardens is a charitable event and this year all proceeds will go to Rennie Grove Peace Hospice Care (Watford Peace Hospice), so everyone involved is supporting an important local cause as well as taking part in a really great community event.

Please text Julie on 07811 798570 or contact us via the Oxhey Open Gardens website: www.oxheyopengardens.co.uk. We are looking forward to hearing from you. The website also has lots of information and some great photos of past events.

Follow us on Facebook:
Oxhey Open Gardens

The hidden impact of engine idling

By **Shirena COUNTER**, OVEG Environment Officer

Did you know that when you let your engine idle on a public highway, you are not just wasting fuel, you could face a fine?

What is engine idling?

Idling means leaving a vehicle's engine running when you're parked. It can be easily done if you start your engine then check your phone or make a call or forget to switch off when waiting in your car to collect someone.

So why worry about engine idling?

It may not even occur to many of us that there is any problem with sitting in our car with the engine running, but here are some disturbing facts:

- Idling your engine for more than **10 seconds** uses more fuel and produces more emissions than stopping and restarting your engine.
- An idling car can produce up to twice as many exhaust emissions as a moving one.
- One minute of engine idling produces more carbon monoxide than the smoke from 60 of cigarettes (that's one cigarette per second!).
- People inside cars with idling engines are exposed to high levels of air pollution, with children especially at risk of harm. Research has also shown that drivers waiting at traffic lights were exposed to as much as 29 times more pollution than those driving in free flowing traffic.

Air quality and the impact on health

Air pollution has been linked to cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease and dementia and people with health conditions and young children are affected the worst. Here are a few "myths" that are often used to justify engine idling:

1. Leaving your car running for a short time uses less fuel and is cheaper than turning it off and on again

Not true. Idling your engine uses around 5% to 8% of fuel so switching off saves both fuel and money.

2. Keeping your engine running is better for your car than switching off and on again

Engine idling is bad for your car too because when it is stationary, it operates less efficiently and leaves a fuel residue which can damage important engine parts like cylinders, spark plugs, and the exhaust which can then increase your fuel consumption.

3. You need to keep the engine running to keep the heater on

If you park and need to keep the car warm, just turn off the engine but leave the heater running. It should stay warm for up to 30 minutes and won't harm your battery.

4. In very cold weather the engine needs to warm up

Letting an engine idle in icy weather can shorten its lifespan. With modern fuel management systems (after 1980) if you let your vehicle idle in the cold you strip away oil from the engine's pistons and cylinders. In most modern cars the engine takes about 30 seconds to warm up until it is ready to drive.

What can I do?

The RAC recommends that motorists turn off their engines if they don't think they'll move for around two minutes. They also advise that frequent restarting is fine unless you have an old battery (five years plus) which may struggle if started too often in a short space of time.

Try to become more aware of the times you might unintentionally sit in your car with the engine running. Check your phone or make a call before switching on your engine and switch it off as soon as you've pulled in. Poor air quality affects us all so let's do what we can to switch off.





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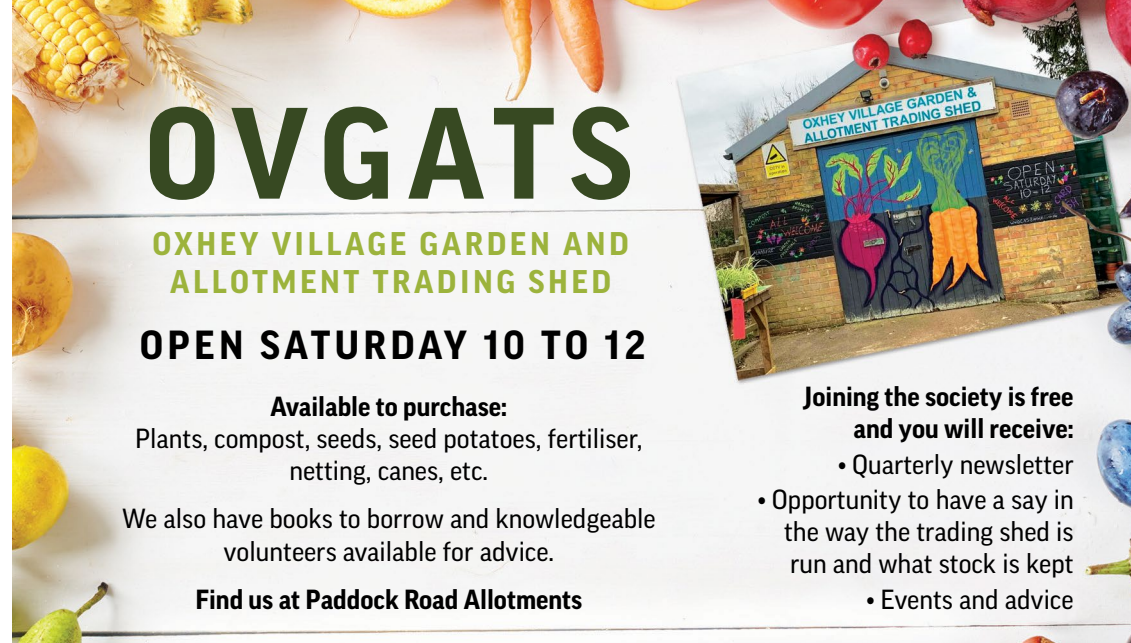
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Committee Member

Shirena Counter
Environment Officer

OVEG membership

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Upcoming events

Oxhey Village Quiz

29th March

Oxhey Village Fayre

7th June

Contributing to the OVEG newsletter

The deadline for news, items, stories, announcements and adverts for the next issue is the last week of February 2025, content subject to available space.

Email: newsletter@oveg.org

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