

# FRIENDS OF OLD HEADINGTON



## AIMS

1. To retain Old Headington as a village, with special emphasis on keeping its lanes, walls, grass verges, and trees.
2. To ensure that new buildings and alterations are in keeping with the existing character of the village.
3. To co-operate with the Oxford Preservation Trust and the City Council in their declared policy of preserving the village.

These aims together make a community project and the Association can achieve them satisfactorily only if everyone in the village realizes

that at times there may be a need for personal sacrifice for the good of the whole.

## WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

1. The Friends came into being in 1959 because of the threat to the village from speculative building in one of its central areas. The struggle to prevent such uncontrolled development took almost four years and involved the raising of money to support the City Council's defence of its decision to restrict the number of houses to be built in this area. In fact, this decision was upheld by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, and the developers, thinking they could no longer profitably engage in developing this land, offered it for sale to the Friends of Old Headington. This was a challenge that had to be met. Money was lent by members of the community who formed a non-profit-making trust to build five houses. These will be completed in the next few months. Owing to the generosity of the Misses Aldous, who sacrificed a piece of the front garden of Pumpkin Cottage to provide the necessary access road, it was possible to preserve No. 4 St. Andrew's Lane, a cottage of great distinction, which would otherwise have been demolished.
2. The grass triangle outside the Vicarage was restored, although the Friends failed to get the kerb made of Headington stone.
3. The Friends were instrumental in having the old lamp posts retained and added to in the centre of the village, although they failed to have them extended throughout the area.
4. The Croft has always been considered by the Friends to be an area of special interest to the village and a watchful eye is kept on it to ensure that its paths are kept inaccessible to motor traffic.
5. The Friends were consulted about the Scout Hut in the grounds of the Parish Hall and they were able to recommend an improvement in its siting.
6. The policy of the Friends is to support the closing of Barton Lane to the By Pass. It is understood that this will be done when the dual carriage way is built.
7. The Hospital Board has acknowledged the interest of the Friends in the building of the new hospital in the Manor House grounds. There have been meetings between the Board and the committee of the Friends who have stressed the importance of ensuring that the old stone walls of the Manor House will remain standing and after the building operations

and the fine trees will remain during and after the building operations. It is understood that the building of the Maternity Block and some residential accommodation will start in 1968. The Friends have had assurances from the Hospital that heavy contractors' vehicles will avoid the narrow roads of the village. Every effort is being made to keep official hospital exits and entrances away from the village.

8. When the extensions to Ruskin Hall were being planned, the Friends were able to secure a change in the siting of the new building that preserves the view from Dunstan Road and does no injury to the neighbouring houses. This new building has attracted much favourable

comment and shows what can be done to achieve a blend of the old and the new in the village.

9. A new house is to be built in the grounds of the Old Pound House. The Friends did not oppose the plan provided that the high stone walls between the Vicarage and the Old Pound House could be safely preserved. The City Council kept the Friends informed throughout their negotiations with the Minister of Housing and Local Government about this proposal.

10. The nuns who lived in All Souls Priory in Old High Street found that the premises were unsuited to their present needs and they sought ways of disposing of the property that would enable them to acquire other accommodation. The Friends had discussions with the Mother Prioress and asked that the convent should not be sold for the kind of development that would involve any change in the frontage of the building. This was agreed and the convent has now been taken over by another order of nuns as a hostel for teachers and students.

11. One of the houses in the centre of the village, 39 St. Andrew's Road, has recently been sold. The purchaser wished to use part of the premises as a nursery school. The Friends did not oppose the project but felt obliged to express their deep concern about the resulting increase in traffic at this dangerous junction. After discussion with the Friends, the vendor placed a covenant on the property to ensure that this change of use would be applicable only to the purchasers and would not accrue to any subsequent owner. The City Council has now granted change of use for an experimental period of one year so that the traffic danger can be watched.

12. The Friends have been called upon for help by other bodies, such as the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. In the recent negotiations with the Central Electricity Board about the use of pylons to carry electric cables from Yarnnton to the substation at the northern extremity of the village, the Friends made representation to the City Council to support the plea of the C.P.R.E. The result you all know. The cable will run underground from Mill Lane to the Headington sub-

station.

13. Another activity that has no end is co-operation with the Footpaths Association in maintaining a right of way from the village, across the Northern By Pass, and over the farm-lands to Elsfield. Members of the Friends are invited to co-operate in this endeavour and to report any infringement of the right of way that comes to their notice.

14. A new group of houses to be built beside Manor Farm House in Dunstan Road was the subject of an appeal to the Minister of Housing and Local Government because the City Council, supported by the Friends, wished to restrict the building to a total of seven houses. The reason for such a restriction was that the siting of two of the proposed nine houses hemmed in the old Manor Farm House which is one of the outstanding buildings in the village and has been scheduled for preservation. The inquiry was held at the Ministry of Housing and Local

Government in London, and the Friends sent in a written representation of their case. Unfortunately the Minister allowed this appeal and nine houses not seven will be built on the Manor Farm site. The Friends are, however, pressing for the two controversial houses to be low or single-storey houses.

15. In 1967, following pressure from the Friends, a Tree Preservation Order was passed by the City Council for outstanding individual trees and groups of trees in Old Headington. Owners of these have each received a notification from the Town Clerk.

The prospects for the future have been made particularly interesting by the passing of the Civic Amenities Act, which offers the possibility of registration as an area of special historic or architectural interest. The Friends are at present engaged in collecting information on this point to see in what way this Act could, with advantage, be applied to Old Headington. They have been aided most generously by the students of the College of Technology who made a survey of the village.

Throughout all their work the Friends have had the support of the City Council and of its planning officials. Their opinion is sought on any new plan for the village and in their answer the Friends try to measure each individual plan against the character of the village as a whole. They also have discussions, where this is possible, with those who are putting forward plans for new buildings or for the structural alteration or change of use of existing ones.

This account of the achievements and failures of the Friends throughout the whole period of their existence is being sent out to show exist-

out the whole period of their existence is being sent out to show existing members where we stand now and to bring to the notice of others who live in the village a record of community action over a wide field. More can be done if those who live in Old Headington will notify the Friends of things that are about to happen that may affect the whole community, such as changes in structure and use of their own property, the cutting down of trees and so on. Suggestions for improvements such as the siting of seats in lanes or footpaths will also be welcome.

For those who wish to make use of it, a subscription form is attached to this account of the Friends' activities. At the Annual General Meeting on 25th April 1967 it was decided that members should have the option of either the present subscription of 2/6 per year or a life membership of £2.0.0 per person or £3.0.0 for a family, i.e. parents and children.

The Executive Committee consists of the Secretary, the Treasurer and seven members who retire in rotation after two years' service. Elections are held at the Annual General Meeting which is held in March or April each year.

The present Honorary Secretary is Mrs E. G. Taylor, 31 St. Andrew's Road, Old Headington. *Tel 62679*