

The fascinating history behind closed doors

THE lamppost banners are up, and last week saw boxfuls of the brochures arrive at the OPT office, ready to be distributed across the City and County, to libraries and community centres, and wherever else we can think of. With over 75% of visitors last year from Oxfordshire we want to keep it local and are working with the City Council to cover as many places as possible across the city.

Oxford Open Doors is for everyone, the young and the older, on your own, with the family or with friends, you are all invited. We keep it free so that you can have a great time and get to know something more about your city and its heritage which for us means town and gown, old and new, hidden treasures, stories and the people, and something of the extraordinary research and scientific achievements coming out of this place too.

Seeing the brochure is a small reminder of the web of administration that goes into agreeing the places and dates, balancing the events across the weekend, liaising with the old timers like Magdalen who support us each year, and working with those less practiced,

and who can be a little daunted when they learn of the likely visitor numbers. In 2018, 30,000 people took in 150,000 visits. But the OPTs expert team are there to lead them through, to support and persuade with a smile, and we have our amazing team of volunteers too, now nearly 200 strong and who will be out and about over the weekend to offer support.

Oxford Open Doors has now become well established in the Oxford calendar, and nowadays takes place on the second weekend of September, to fit in with the University and College timetable and coincides with the national Heritage Open Days. We rely on the financial support of the University to keep it free, and this year have been helped by Oxford Brookes once again, and by generous support from Malmesdon who celebrate 25 years of their hotels this year.

Oxford Open Doors is in its twelfth year. We are grateful to Oxford Brookes History intern, Vincent Camwell, who has been sorting out the accumulated filing dating back to 2007. It all began with OPT

contributing to the 'Thousand years of Oxfordshire' celebrations and what was then 'Opening Doors, Opening Minds' funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, held in June with twenty-five venues opening 'offering behind-the-scenes glimpses of some of the city's most fascinating places'. Looking back at the original leaflet, which in 2019 has almost become a book! The continuing support of the Oxford Bus Company needs mention as they allow us to advertise on their buses every year and help the wonderful Oxfordshire Bus Museum who have been running vintage bus tours since the beginning. Back then I remember the highlight of Sir Roger Bannister's Gold Olympic medals being on display, so how exciting that in 2019 the Iffley Road track, where he ran the first sub-four-minute-mile, will open.

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VOLUNTARY VOICE

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