

Councillor James Fry,
7 Rawlinson Road,
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October, 2024

Invitation to a Fund-raising Dinner towards the Restoration of the Walton Well Drinking Fountain.

Today the old Walton Well Drinking Fountain, built in 1885 to supply drinking water to nearby residents, is badly in need of restoration. For a long time, the late John Sutton, who lived at the southern end of Southmoor Road, overlooking the Drinking Fountain, wrote articles and booklets to generate interest in restoring the fountain. At last, his persistence has borne fruit.

Tom Shebbeare and I have secured promises of donations towards the costs of restoring the Fountain to its original appearance and attaching it to a water main so that it can once again provide drinking water for people on their way to and from Port Meadow. Overleaf you will find the press release from the Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) to announce this initiative, together with a photo of its current sad state and a Victorian drawing of its original splendour.

Despite generous promises of donations, more money needs to be raised to complete this task. To achieve this, the OPT has kindly agreed to support this project. It is providing the administration needed to oversee its completion and manage the bank account for donations, which can take advantage of OPT's charitable status to benefit from Gift Aid.

The OPT is now launching an appeal for funds from its network of supporters and I am holding a fund-raising dinner in Al Shami, Richmond Road, at 7 p.m. on Sunday 17th November to generate local interest in the project and seek donations from nearby residents who know the Drinking Fountain well.

The cost of the dinner with multiple meze courses is £50. This will generate a surplus for the project, but we also hope that people will offer additional donations towards the costs of the restoration. At the dinner we will offer for sale, thanks to the generosity of John's widow, Inez, copies of the last booklet that John Sutton wrote about the history of the Fountain.

Since I have made the booking at Al Shami and will coordinate with the restaurant about the number of diners and any special dietary requirements, I would be grateful if you would send me details of your bookings for the dinner.

Payment should be made, ideally by bank transfer, to Oxford Preservation Trust, account number: 10681326, sort code: 20-65-18 (please use your name as the reference). If you prefer to pay by cheque, please make it payable to Oxford Preservation Trust and send it to me at my home address, given below. If you cannot come to the dinner, but would like to make a donation, please do so directly to the OPT via the website link given overleaf.

If, as I hope, the restaurant space is filled very quickly, I will arrange another similar dinner.

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Oxford Preservation Trust launches new fundraising appeal to restore the Walton Well Drinking Fountain to full working order

Oxford Preservation Trust has announced their next restoration project for the city, the Walton Well Drinking Fountain, depicted below as it is today and as it originally looked.

Lying disused at the junction of Walton Well and Southmoor Roads, the drinking fountain was erected in 1885 on the site of a natural spring. It was paid for by William Ward, a local coal merchant who was Mayor of Oxford in 1851-52, and again in 1861-62. The architect Harry Wilkinson Moore designed the fountain in a classic Renaissance style. It was carved in Portland stone and a plaque was affixed to the fountain reading "Drink and think of Him who is the fountain of life". William Ward gifted the drinking fountain to the city of Oxford.

The late John Sutton worked very hard to achieve the restoration of the fountain, publishing a detailed book which acts as an essential reference source for the project.

Public drinking fountains have become few and far between. This fountain will be invaluable as a water source to fill drinking bottles for people along on the main route to Port Meadow.

City Councillor and Sheriff, James Fry has written "Restoring the Walton Well will bring a vital part of local history back to life and bring the Fountain back to its former glory."

Anna Eavis, Chief Executive of OPT, says "Oxford Preservation Trust is delighted to be restoring the Walton Well Drinking Fountain so it can again provide fresh drinking water."

The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire Marjorie Glasgow said "I'm eager to restore the Walton Well to its former glory and to serve the local community as a drinking fountain once again".

With support already received from the Lord Lieutenant, Councillors James Fry and Louise Upton, the Oxfordshire Buildings Trust and Lucy Group Ltd, who have been based on Walton Well Road for over 200 years, the first round of fund-raising is well under way towards meeting the initial target of £40,000, and we are now seeking further donations.

To learn more about the project and to make a donation visit:

<https://www.oxfordpreservation.org.uk/walton-well-drinking-fountain>.

