

# OurView

## Our city is not prepared to be ignored over flooding

If David Cameron or whoever holds the purse strings thought Oxford's demand for flood protection would recede with the water levels, they were very much mistaken.

Today we report that the Prime Minister has been asked to ensure the mooted £160m channel to the west of the city becomes a reality after yet another winter of flooding-caused chaos.

That the letter comes from a united political front of Bob Price, the city council leader, plus the blue and red Oxford MPs in Nicola Blackwood and Andrew Smith respectively shows Oxford is not prepared to be ignored.

The trio called on Mr Cameron, the MP for neighbouring Witney, to financially and, pointedly, morally back the city's claim.

Flooding in this city is becoming almost routine but there is no way we should just shrug our collective shoulders and don the wellies two out of every three winters to wade down either Abingdon or Botley Road.

It is not acceptable.

We can all accept that £160m is a lot of money that can't just be found by checking down the back of the sofa in No 10.

But Oxford can't just be abandoned. It needs this flood channel or some other large-scale scheme to prevent repeats of 2007, 2012 and this year and surely having Mr Cameron living just over the way is an advantage the city should use.

And, in addition, his constituents are also affected when Oxford suffers.

Unfortunately there was no comment from Mr Cameron despite repeated requests.

But he and the Government should not make the mistake in thinking our demand for a real solution will go away.

## Replica set to be a big hit with adults

Most men are big kids at heart and so we can expect the giant replica toy car built by John and Geoff Bitmead to be exceptionally popular.

We can't see it ending up like the "real" toy car it is modelled on, stuck out in the back garden in all weathers with a faded roof, one door hanging off and a dried out marmite sandwich smeared on the seat.

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# University Life

# 'Wisdom, wonders and widgets' for uni's 150th



ANNIVERSARY: Anna Myers in the Abercrombie Building

Picture OX64896 Antony Moore

**A**LMOST 150 years ago, Oxford saw the humble beginnings of an institution that would go on to play a critical role in the development of the city and its people.

In 1865, Oxford Brookes' early incarnation, the Oxford School of Art, held its first classes in a small room in the Taylorian Institute.

Today, the university is in the midst of plans to celebrate its anniversary, launching with an event in March at the Ashmolean Museum – next door to where it all began.

Although the art school opened almost 150 years ago, its story really goes back to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which saw a huge shift in the perception of education and what it could offer after one third of the population visited the event, and came away awed and inspired by their insight into the forefront of artistry and technologies of the world.

The successful exhibition was followed by government activity to widen provision of technical and artistic education – and the narrow crack of education, which had previously been mainly viewed as a luxury for gentlemen, suddenly opened a little.

This was the context in which the Oxford School of Art opened, and it

## Anna Myers

**Project manager for Oxford Brookes' 150th anniversary celebrations in 2015**

is fitting that this ethos of 'education for all' mirrors the vision of Brookes' modern founder, John Henry Brookes. This continues to guide the programming and personality of the institution and one of the core characteristics of the university is its generosity of spirit.

It wasn't long before the under-funded School of Art was forced to move into the basement of the Taylorian in the early 1870s to make way for John Ruskin's school of art, which opened on the ground floor.

While the damp basement was deemed suitable exclusively for the 'industrial classes' who became students of the Oxford School of Art, wealthier students were permitted to enrol at the Ruskin School upstairs.

The earliest incarnation of Oxford Brookes therefore quickly began to fight its corner as an educator of Oxford's sons and daughters.

The wider curriculum of our institution began in those early days too, with the Oxford School of Science starting up in 1868, merging

to become the Oxford School of Art and Science. Today, having increased its offering to the needs of its communities, and having forged partnerships with local specialist institutions, Brookes offers education in hundreds of courses, and has rightly earned a reputation for its excellent teaching and learning.

To begin the celebrations of our 150th anniversary, we will return to our roots in central Oxford in a few weeks' time, as we join the Ashmolean in hosting a 'Live Friday' event on March 14.

Held after hours, the museum's displays of priceless artefacts will provide the backdrop to performances, workshops and exhibitions from Brookes students, staff and alumni entitled 'Wisdom, Wonders and Widgets'.

In a feast for the senses, visitors will be able to talk to humanoid robots, listen to unsigned singing stars of the future and use pioneering eye tracking technology to understand how we look at paintings.



FOUNDING FATHER: John Henry Brookes

Among many other displays they will be able to turn their smartphones into microphones, see racing cars built by students, many of whom will progress to F1 teams, and see a mountain bike made from bamboo as we bring some of the technologies of today back to the place where it all began.

**▲ You can find news, updates and get involved in the conversation at: #brookes2015 and #LiveFriday or visit our anniversary social wall: brookes.ac.uk/150-years/social-wall**