

OurView

Flood of relief for some, but the danger has still not passed

CAMPAIGNERS worked tirelessly to get multi-million-pound defences installed after the devastating floods of 2007.

Yesterday it was clear from visiting many areas that their efforts had paid off to varying degrees.

The message from residents across the county was that it could have been a lot worse.

While it is still early days and there's only so much you can do to protect against Mother Nature it's clear that money spent on various schemes has had an effect.

We saw the flood barriers for Osney Island go up on Sunday as the county prepared for the worst and yesterday they seemed to have gone some way to protect homes in the area.

There was a similar picture over in South Hinksey which has benefited from flood defences worth £1m put into nearby Hinksey Stream including new flood walls.

Residents in the area, previously victims of flooding, have had pumps installed in their homes which are going some way to alleviate flood water.

Claire Wilson, who lives in South Hinksey, was yesterday assessing the damage to her home but remained cautiously relieved that it could have been a lot worse.

In 2007 they had 13 inches of floodwater in their home but it was nowhere near that yesterday and she said a lot of it is down to the flood defence systems installed.

But with a limited pot of money and resources the defences can only go so far in protecting people and their homes.

Despite all the efforts of council and Environment Agency staff, there will be people across the county today counting the cost of damage to their businesses and homes. We can only hope that it is not as bad as what we've seen in previous years.

House building is a funny old game

ONCE upon a time, building homes was a simple business. Now, it seems, homes are getting built in all sorts of places.

Pubs, gardens, churches – and football stadium car parks, as we report today.

The Kassam Stadium is known for offering hope, glory – and a good kick-about.

It is not often associated with stamp duty and mortgages.

Some of the land around the stadium is not in use. Yet some will have questions about whether these plans make sense.

Ourpolicy

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University Life

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Biography will publicise little known uni founder



ENTHUSIASTIC: Bryan Brown has written a biography of John Henry Brookes

Picture: OX64410 David Fleming

TO be the modern founder of a university is a remarkable achievement but to be relatively unknown for doing so is a great injustice.

So for the last few years I have been working on a campaign with the university to re-assert the legacy of a remarkable educationalist – John Henry Brookes.

JHB (as he was known throughout his life) arrived in Oxford in 1928 as Head of the Oxford School of Art with two staff and 90 students to lead an institution which had grown little since its founding in 1865.

When he retired in 1956, most of the principal activities of the university of the 21st century were established. It was quite an accomplishment in 28 years.

All the more impressive when one considers the historical context; commencing in the Great Depression of the late 20s and 30s, working up to and through World War Two and its deprived aftermath until the glimmer of recovery in the 1950s.

The accomplishment is further enhanced by the knowledge that he created two schools and a college of further education during the same period. It is an outstanding achievement, the nature of which is perhaps unparalleled in British education.

JHB was born in 1891 in Northampton. He was a bright boy and did well at grammar school. Showing capability for art and design,

BRYAN Brown has recently completed a biography of John Henry Brookes, due to be published this year. He practiced as a designer running his own business, and is an alumnus of the university, an Honorary Fellow and recommended the name and designed the corporate brand when the former polytechnic became a university in 1992. In the third of Oxford Brookes' series looking at key points in its history, Mr Brown looks back to the early 20th century at another important era

JOHN HENRY BROOKES 1891-1975: THE MODERN FOUNDER OF OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

he moved on to Leicester College of Art.

During these years he was greatly influenced by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. He learnt and practised craft skills at the Guild of Handicrafts in Chipping Campden but teaching was in his blood and at the age of 37 he moved to Oxford as head of the School of Art.

He later described his time in developing the college in Oxford as 'the lean years'.

Not only did he have to operate in dire economic conditions but he had only limited support from central and local government.

Undaunted, he set up new courses and departments and took space all

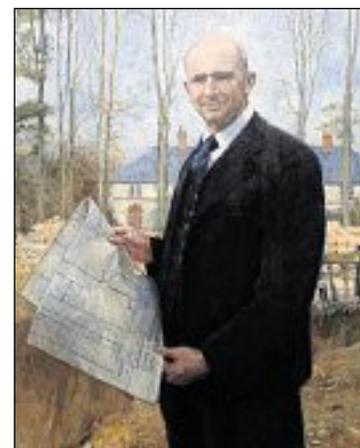
over the city which eventually numbered 19 different locations.

Even when the city council had purchased a site in 1950 they refused planning permission for a new college building and he had to organise a campaign to achieve his goal.

This he did in the final years of his career and when he retired from the new college he called it, 'The promised land'.

JHB was not only a remarkable educationalist, he was a very capable artist and craftsman and a man of the community helping to create more than 40 charitable and community organisations.

During his life he was recognised by an honorary MA from the University



LEARNED: John Henry Brookes

of Oxford and an OBE but although Oxford Brookes University bears his name, his legacy has faded.

Over recent years I have researched JHB's life and given a number of public lectures.

We have had a Oxfordshire Blue Plaque on the house where he lived for 46 years, a splendid posthumous portrait by the eminent portrait painter and alumnus, Anthony Morris and the new building of the main university campus is named after him.

As the university approaches the 150th anniversary of its foundation, a year of celebration is planned.

I trust JHB's legacy will be re-established in the City to which he gave so much.