



**RESPONSE TO SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT REGARDING AG (Amazing Grace)
250**

JUNE 2019 OTC Meeting Item 11: Amazing Grace 250

- A paper was tabled by Cllr Collins explaining that 2023 would mark the 250th anniversary of 'Amazing Grace'. The aim of the project was to bring the community together in Olney, through activities and programmes that celebrate its international heritage story and increase civic pride, happiness, and a sense of cultural, economic and social wellbeing. Olney Town Council was asked to endorse the project and did so.
- **Extract from Minute of Olney Town Council 3rd June 2019**
11. Amazing Grace 250
RESOLVED: To support the project where possible
- The next phase of the project was to engage with local organisations and host a discussion/workshop attended by 30 people from a variety of organisations in the Town. This took place on 9th October 2019 at the Carlton house Club (see poster below). The public *were* consulted.



| COWPER & NEWTON MUSEUM

Amazing Grace 250 Celebrations



Did you know that Amazing Grace will be 250 years old in 2023?

As such a large part of our community's history, we just knew we had to throw a massive party to celebrate! As it is not just a part of the museum's history, but the whole area's, we want YOU to help us organise it. Got a great idea you've been sitting on, waiting for the right opportunity?

Maybe you run a dance or singing group, or have fabulous design skills? Even if you are just nosey and want to find out what's going on, please make a note in your diary for the:

9th October, 7pm til 9pm

Carlton House Club, 38 High St, Olney MK46 4BB

We will be meeting for an informal chat and exchange of ideas to help get the ball rolling on what will be a fantastic year for the town. Don't miss out on a great opportunity to have your say in how we will celebrate – we look forward to seeing you there!

- **Paper tabled at the Full Council Meeting.**
- **AG250: Progress to date and Proposal**

Background:

1st January 2023 will see the 250th Anniversary of “Amazing Grace” – a hymn written by John Newton for a service he delivered in the parish church of St Peter & St Paul in Olney on 1st January 1773. This was Hymn number 41 of 348 Hymns published collectively later as “The Olney Hymns” in 1779.

John Newton originally entitled the hymn “Faith’s Review and Expectation” and certainly would have had no idea that as “Amazing Grace” it would grow to become a worldwide phenomenon .

As previously reported, this presents a one off opportunity to promote Olney both locally, nationally, and internationally and ticks many boxes in our local plan. The council has previously formally endorsed the concept.

A public meeting at the Carlton House Club was well attended and threw up a wide range of ideas from community groups.

Where we are now:

The attached spread sheet shows the current “state of play”, not all of these ideas will come to fruition but from the level of interest expressed many will. It is anticipated that the programme of events would run from mid 2022 to mid 2023. Some external funding has been secured to enable the project to be launched in conjunction with the Visit Olney website. Olney will be more heavily promoted as a day out destination together with a top line story of Amazing Grace. There will be an AG250 calendar of events and a free directory entry for local shops and eateries. Target launch date 1st January 2020.

The next stage:

It will be seen from the envisaged scale of events that to realise its full potential, significant external funding will be required to both bring projects to fruition and to supply the necessary administrative support needed.

To give external bids for funding credibility we have to evidence local support. Other towns that run festival events e.g Stamford, do so with support from their local councils.

We are in regular contact with Shane Downer , MKC’s Heritage Officer who has agreed to advise on external sources of funding.

Proposal:

With this in mind, I would like to propose that the budgets for each of the financial years ended 31st March 2021, 2022, and 2023 should allocate a sum of £5,000 (total £15,000) towards an AG250 Reserve. This equates to less than £2 per household per year.

This fund could be used to make small grants to local organisations and to pump prime larger bids to external providers.

To the extent that any of this earmarked reserve is not allocated by 30th June 2023, the remaining balance to be added to the Town’s Community Fund.

I invite the full council to support this proposal,

Cllr Paul Collins
26th November 2019

- **Extract from Minute of Olney Town Council 3rd June 2019**

6. To discuss AG2022 Cllr Collins left the meeting There was a request to allocate £5k per year 21/22/23 for AG250 reserve total £15k.

There was discussion around how this could be done, was it right to do and where the money could come from. Also, where the money is planned to be spent. In general, there was support for a community celebration.

Resolved: To ensure that £5K is budgeted into the Sidney Dix (Community Fund) for the next three years and that the AG250 group can then apply through the grant system when they have a clear idea of what the monies will be needed for.

TO CONCLUDE:

- From the above it can be seen that proper procedures have been followed.
- OTC funding is aimed primarily at promoting small scale local community events.
- OTC funding will be administered by OTC.
- External funding will be sought for larger events which may take place in a variety of locations in Milton Keynes.
- The idea that S106 public art funding could replace Olney Town Council's local funding initiative is not realistic.
- The public and local organisations have been involved.
- The 20/21, 21/22 and, 22/23 Budgets have/will provide £5K in each year to fund this initiative.
- Unfortunately, COVID 19 has severely hampered preparations.
- To date none of the £15K committed by Olney Town Council has been allocated.

Cllr Paul Collins