

**DAMAGE:** Too costly to repair skatepark

# The wheels come off skaters' hopes



■ Chris Walker

A LEGENDARY skatepark may have seen its last handplant after an independent safety report deemed it too expensive to repair.

The Botley Bowl was badly damaged five months ago when thieves rammed it with a stolen van before setting the vehicle alight.

The blaze damaged the concrete and left a cocktail of toxic materials in the bowl, leaving North Hinksey Parish Council with a £1,400 clean-up bill.

Now a new report says the 19-year-old skate bowl, which was designed by two Oxford skating champions, could cost up to £20,000 to fully resurface – £13,500 more than it cost to build in 1991.

The figure does not include the cost of repairing the damaged groundwork of the bowl, which sits in Louis Memorial Playing Fields.

Because of the size of the overall bill the parish council is unlikely to get insurance cover which would allow the



■ LEGENDARY: Top, Man Barbour, of the SS20 shop in Cowley Road, left, and resident Ag Mackeith at The Botley Bowl, above left, the burnt-out van and, right, Sean Goff at the bowl

## It's part of England's skating heritage

Barbour is upset it looks like the end of the road for the bowl he co-designed.

Mr Barbour, 41, who runs the SS20 skateboard shop in Cowley Road, said: "It's an utter crying shame that it got damaged."

"It's part of England's skating heritage and people travelled the length and breadth of the country to ride that bowl."

"I hope it can be replaced, but it's in the hands of the parish council to give some statement of intention."

Local resident Ag Mackeith, of Old Botley, who first pro-

much more cheaply. However, Mr Barbour, who designed the guitar-shaped bowl with former English Skateboard Association half-pipe champion Sean Goff, said: "In theory we could do a £1,500 repair job and skim over the concrete but the frost will get to it and it will become dangerous in a year or two."

Mr Barbour visited the bowl as part of a safety inspection by the directors of Britain's leading skatepark designer firm Gravity Engineering.

Owner and sales director Paul Allen said: "We spent an

hour was resignation. It is unsafe to ride.

"I wouldn't set foot in the bowl with a board if you paid me."

"There's huge holes in the surface itself and water in the holes that are left."

"It's a real shame because it's a legendary park."

Council chairman Briony Newport said the council was unable to say if a replacement would be provided until it heard back from its insurers.

She said: "We are disappointed that the considerable damage identified in Gravity's report indicates it is beyond safe repair but the final decision rests with the council's insurers as clearly the council cannot have any play equipment which is