

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 44
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Welcome to Issue number 44 of OxPA's Newsletter! Spring seems to have arrived early, and whatever else one may think about that, it certainly encourages people out on foot. In the mornings hundreds of pedestrians walk into Oxford across Magdalen and Folly Bridges, crushed onto the narrow pavements, breathing the fumes of the vehicles inching by. Oxford has still a few changes of priority to make before it is actually *encouraging* walking.

Some members have not yet sent their renewal subs to Ray. Please send your cheque for £3 to Ray Jones, at 72 Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9HU.

1) James Gagg and Ben Fryer could not come to our January meeting, but attended the February one instead. Both are Transport Planners working for the County Council and liaising with OxPA on core pedestrian routes. Two routes are currently under scrutiny; around Jericho and from there to the city centre; and the Botley Road route from Elms Parade to Nuffield College. The results of the Jericho study are in the pipeline, and should be available from Babbie (the County's consultant) in a few weeks. **Babbie have done a detailed study of the route from the A34 junction to Binsey Lane, along Botley Road. The main issue is inconsistent cycle-lane/footway provision, with the two paths crisscrossing unpredictably. Now, however, the cycle lane is to be put adjacent to the road all along its length.** The difficulty about what cyclists do when their lane runs between bus shelters and the road has not been resolved. It was suggested by the officers that cyclists be encouraged to give way, but will they? And is it fair to have a cycle lane which is also a pavement? If roads were made safe for cyclists, pavements would be freed to walkers, and roads would be a good deal safer too. **The other pressing danger to walkers is where the slip road leads off Botley Road to the A34. Although the main pedestrian highway crosses the traffic lanes there is currently no pedestrian phase in the lights.** Apparently this is 'a very complex junction' which is 'being looked at' (with pedestrians in mind).

James and Ben also brought the news that **Hertford Street in east Oxford has been nominated to become Oxford's pilot project in home zoning (ie. pedestrian-friendly scheme). The results of this will determine the future of home zones in Oxford. (Recently the County was awarded £100,000 for home zones throughout the County. There will be one in each of the five district electoral areas.)**

The two County Officers said that 'we are undergoing a quiet revolution in transport thinking,' because putting pedestrians first is the very opposite of what has been done since the 1930's.

2) The Missing Link Project. OxPA members Jenny, Ray and Jocelyn spent five hours with Geoff Steeley of the National Retail Forum, and John Herbert, from Town Planners and Urban Design, Tottenham Ct Rd, London, who are doing research on how people (who would mostly be pedestrians) access retail outlets from their arrival point in city centres. Together they all looked at three routes in Oxford; from the railway station, the bus station, and the Westgate car park to the centre. Among other valuable gems, OxPA members pointed out to them that **backways, subways, footbridges and site entrances etc. are never on maps,** which are tellingly drawn with vehicles in mind. The surveyors must have been pleased, because OxPA is to receive £100 to add to our growing wealth!

3) Summary of the Government response to the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee's Report on Walking in Towns and Cities. In some ways this is a very positive document, in that it reflects the change in Government thinking about walking as a form of transport. But when one reads it in detail it seems rather depressing. **The Government agrees with almost every point made by the Committee, but then falls short of a commitment to act on any of them.** They either say the work has already been done, in the form of advice to Local Authorities (LAs), trusts etc. about things they could (but do not have to) do, or that it does not need to be done. So for example the words 'accident reduction' will not be replaced by 'danger reduction' with its change of emphasis, but by 'casualty reduction', which is not materially different. The Government also sees no need to reclassify urban roads to take account of all their functions, but says, **'The classification of each road is determined by its importance in the local distribution of traffic'**. Likewise, although the Government agrees that **pavement parking is 'generally unsatisfactory'**, they will not legislate against it. However, they have given LAs the power to do so if they so choose. (A lobbying point!) The Government do not wish to adopt national walking targets, but encourage LA's to do so, as part of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process. There is to be no National Walking Forum, but the idea of an 'interactive web site' is being explored. The Government disagrees that walking is not afforded the importance it deserves in terms of the spending of LTP money, but says current spending is 'balanced' and 'aimed at improving transport provision across all modes.'

Altogether the Government seems keen to encourage walking, but falls short of giving pedestrians equal rights to drivers in terms of space and convenience. The giveaway assumption in the document is, **'...for most people the car will continue to be the travel mode of choice for most journeys.'** For as long as this is the assumption, things will not change very much, as it is an assumption which pushes pedestrians to the periphery.

4) Our status vis a vis the National Pedestrians Association. Ray wrote to them stating our unease about the terms under which we would affiliate to or become a branch of them. As yet we have received no reply.

5) We have about £400 in our kitty. An excellent idea brought to our February meeting was that of creating a walking map of Oxford, to include backways, footbridges, subways, site entrances. It could have our logo and a small blurb plus local contact numbers on the back. **Please bring any other ideas for the use of our funds to meetings, or contact one of the numbers below.**

6) Car-free Day. Corinne got hold of **Samantha Tharme** (the County Officer who should liaise with us on this, but who has not contacted us), but she seems reluctant, says she 'doesn't want to antagonise people by closing off a street.' **Undeterred, we chose Broad Street as the one which could be closed for the day.** This suggestion is to go back to Ms Tharme.

7) There will be an OxPA stall on Sat April 6th at the Greenpeace Fair, in the Wesley Memorial Hall on New In Hall Street. Please feel free to come and help, or donate something we can sell.

Our next two meetings are on Mondays March 18th and April 15th. Please come, and bring anyone who may be interested. Everybody is welcome!
