



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

June 2012

Welcome to Newsletter 103

Welcome also to the summer and its increased opportunities for walking. It is fortunate that there are plenty of green places and some traffic-free streets in Oxford, because traffic-related air pollution rises in the hot sunshine owing to the chemical reaction of sunlight on exhaust fumes. The whole of Oxford is still formally recognized as an area requiring remedial action on pollution (AQMA: Air Quality Management Action), but apart from pressure on bus companies to get cleaner engines, nothing is done. The worst-affected streets in the city centre are Hythe Bridge Street, Thames Street, Worcester Place, Beaumont Street, St.Aldates and Longwall Street. Cyclists and pedestrians are most affected - and children are especially vulnerable, as their lungs are closer to vehicle exhaust pipes. If you can avoid these streets in the hot sunshine, do so.

A new Transport Hub for Oxford?

Dr Andrew Pritchard, Transport Group Convenor of the Oxford Civic Society, gave his time and expertise to OxPA's May meeting to explain a proposal to move Oxford railway station to the north-west edge of Oxpens. This idea was first worked up for the County Council in 1992 and has since lain more or less dormant. However, with the imminent expansion of the station, the increasing number of trains passing through, and the planned electrification of the lines, change is afoot anyway. The proposal is that the station would become a new transport hub, accessible by train, local and national buses, bicycles, cars and pedestrians, so that travellers can switch transport mode easily and conveniently.

Oxford railway station has only two main platforms, which means that trains often have to wait outside the station. This is unpleasant for drivers and passengers, but also for local residents, who have complained for many years about diesel fumes and the loud intrusive noise from vibrating engines. The number of freight trains has increased over the past two years by 30%, whilst the number of passenger trains grew by 49% in 2009. Despite significant increases in fares rail use is growing.

The many advantages of moving the station to the Oxpens site include: making Frideswide Square easier to negotiate; creating a more accessible bus station than Gloucester Green for local and country buses; providing a transport hub with increased cycle parking

(current station cycle parking is insufficient with no room for expansion). The great bonus is that the present station would not have to be closed during the new construction. New walkways between the station and the city centre would have to be developed, but actual routes have not yet been worked out for any road user. To learn more follow the link from our website www.oxpa.org.uk.

OxPA has been asked if we will support this proposal. As we are not yet clear about accessibility to and from the new site, particularly for walkers, we have decided to make our June walk an exploration of this part of Oxford. The area in question, at present up for sale, is not itself accessible, but we will be able to see how the site would be reached by rail, bus, and foot, and assess the potential for footpaths to the city centre. The walk will be led by Felicity, who lives nearby, and will be able to explain some of its history. We will meet at Folly Bridge, west side, at 7pm on Tuesday June 26. Everybody welcome, as always.

Bike Polite

Following improvements to the surface of the canal towpath in central Oxford, pedestrians with mobility difficulties and wheelchairs can now enjoy a level walk along Oxford Canal, which is an attractive link (and often a shortcut) between parts of the city. Of course, the canal towpath has always been used as a safe, convenient cycle route too. However the new smoother surface encourages a few cyclists to use their bicycles in ways which threaten the

safety and comfort of walkers, cycling very fast past people (who may justifiably step unexpectedly to one side to look at a duck or something), ringing bells suddenly and impatiently behind pedestrians, blinding them with excessively bright lights, or in other ways expecting to have priority on the often narrow path. Bike Polite (www.politecycling.info) is a set of informal rules which aim to create a more courteous culture on shared foot- and cycle-ways. The two rules which are most relevant to this situation are "Slow down when passing pedestrians and at bridges" on narrow towpaths, and (on all shared pathways) "Slow down, ring bell, say thanks when passing". Many of OxPA's members are also cyclists; let us help show the way to share paths politely!

See Me Save Me

This is the name of RoadPeace's new campaign for mandatory proximity sensors and cameras to be installed on all HGVs in order to eliminate blind spots and reduce the casualties they cause. Since 2000 over 220 London pedestrians and cyclists have died in collisions with lorries. Lorries are involved in two-thirds of the deaths while accounting for only 5% of London trips. Visit www.seemesaveme.com for more details and write to your MP to support this campaign to make our roads safer for people on foot. There are several places in Oxford where large lorries and pedestrians have to share very limited space, and risks would be much reduced by enhanced safety technology.

More 20mph....

Liverpool Primary Care Trust is contributing to the cost of extending 20mph limits to cover 70% of Liverpool's roads, in recognition of the health benefits of slower speeds. It is estimated this will result in 54 fewer deaths a year, and save more than £5.2 million annually. This saving is in addition to the health benefits to people encouraged to walk and cycle more by a safer and more pleasant street environment. For more details visit www.liverpoolpct.nhs.uk

Paediatric Pedestrians

Although used to finding Oxford's narrow central pavements challenging, it was an eye-opener to attempt walking along them with a six year old. I was shocked to see how buffeted she was, without receiving any acknowledgement or apology. All sorts and ages of people in St Aldates and Queen Street appeared not to see her at all, and then having tried to walk through her, not to feel any need to acknowledge the fact. She gamely trotted along without

complaint and is, I presume, used to the experience. Until then my assumption had been that our general attitudes to children are far more inclusive and considerate than they used to be. I would be most interested to hear what other members feel about this and, if it is a significant issue, what could be done to improve the situation. **Contact Felicity Wenden 01865 251212**

April Walk

An enjoyable walk from Angel & Greyhound Meadow, along the Cherwell Mesopotamia path between King's Mill and the Parks, then across to the wooded footpaths between William Street and South Parks. This made an interesting circular walk for the intrepid band, who braved the showery weather and added another riverside walk to our portfolio.

Stalls

OxPA has been invited to attend the Lord Mayor's Jubilee Tea Party on Monday 4th June in Gloucester Green. As usual we will be manning a stall to promote OxPA and our many activities. This should be an exciting and enjoyable occasion with live music and performances and food! If you can offer an hour or two between 12 and 6pm to support OxPA **please contact Felicity on 01865 251212**

Next meetings:

June 26th. Evening walk, meeting at 7pm on Folly Bridge to explore the potential for a new transport hub and station at Oxpens. All welcome. Tel 790783 or 07909818419 in case of bad weather.

July 24th. Evening walk in Headington Hill Park to include the historic bridge and a tour of many interesting trees, led by Dr Ian Gourlay. Meet at 7pm at the junction of Pullens Lane and Headington Road. Tel 779663 or 07780654308 for more details.

Contacts

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