



# Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

June 2011

## Welcome to Newsletter 98 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

### Paul Cullen: OxPA Chairman 2005-2010

The death of Paul Cullen shortly after he retired from the Chair of OxPA has been widely mourned amongst the many organisations in which he was active. OxPA members have special reasons for mourning, but also for celebrating his legacy of improvements for people on foot in Oxford. He was deeply committed to promoting the rights of pedestrians and endlessly patient in seeking solutions to problems of sharing Oxford's crowded public places. His commonsense, tact, and above all, kindness, often resulted in potential opponents working together for the common good. We will all miss his optimism and genial presence at our monthly meetings and will be inspired to take forward his aim of improving the pedestrian's experience in Oxford.

### Good Journey?

At our May meeting Deborah Whelan (County Accessibility Officer) and Elizabeth Agar (access for people with sensory impairments) talked about how they work with both people and the environment to help people retain independent mobility. Illustrating their presentation with specially designed glasses to give us an impression of sight impairments, they talked us through how people with sensory impairments can be enabled to manage crossings, scaffolding poles, steps, signs, and road safety issues. They gave us the little-known piece of information that where a bleeper cannot be used at a crossing (because it is too near another crossing with a bleeper) there are tactile cones about the size and shape of a thimble on the underside of the push button boxes. Once you have pressed the button, slide your hand across the underside of the push button box to find the cone. When the green man is showing, the cone will rotate, indicating that it is safe to

cross the road. You can contact Deborah about obstructions such as persistent 'A' board and other removable street clutter, at [deborah.whelan@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:deborah.whelan@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or 01865 323196. The team for people with visual impairments can be reached directly on (01865) 894935, and the hearing impairment team on (01865) 894925.

### Westgate Centre

The latest news from the City Council and Crown Estates (to whom the public land at the Westgate Centre and all around it has been handed) is that in addition to a huge retail re-development, from the current Westgate Library to the Oxpens Road, and the huge new multi-storey car park, we are going to have a new cinema on the site, and a reduction in the small number of residential units that were planned. Whilst it is accepted by both councils that the proposed development will increase traffic on the already polluted and congested residential streets of

Botley and Abingdon Roads, and the residential areas between them, no studies have been done on the impact of building a new cinema there. Concerns are this would impact badly on the independent cinemas we already have, and further increase the traffic on surrounding streets. If these proposals (enthusiastically welcomed by the majority of councillors on the City Council) go ahead, Oxford will be a big step closer to becoming another 'clone town' and will have traffic congestion and air pollution problems worse than anything we have yet seen. **Not happy with this? Please make your thoughts known to Cllr Bob Price on Oxford City Council.**

### **Stalls**

We had an enjoyable but very damp day at the Lord Mayor's picnic in the Botanic Garden on Monday 31st May. Unfortunately the rain and wind deterred many from attending so it was only a small number who were able to enjoy the music, activities and delicious food (provided by Donnington doorstep). But it did offer an opportunity to talk about OxPA to members of the public and to remind some city councillors of our concerns about the street environment in the city. Our **next stall** date is on the afternoon of July 3rd, in South Park at the foot of Headington Hill in the annual Cowley Festival event. Anyone who is free to spend some time on the stall will be most welcome: please phone Felicity on 01865 251212.

### **Are road injuries and deaths accidents?**

RoadPeace (*see the link on our website*) has been campaigning against the inappropriate use of "accident" in reporting road injuries. The Police now prefer to use "incident" or "collision", at least until a cause is established, and the health professions have recognised that "accident", with

its implications of randomness and inevitability, is a misleading term for road crashes. Hospital departments that have to deal with the tragic results of these incidents have dropped "Accident" and been renamed simply as "Emergency Medicine". The majority of road traffic incidents are due to stupid or inconsiderate behaviour (by planners or road users) and are preventable. As a society we insist on design and education to minimise injuries in industry and the home. We should put similar effort into vehicle design and driver training to reduce the far greater daily toll on our roads. Perhaps OxPA should encourage the media to use language which could shape more constructive attitudes towards road deaths and injuries?

### **OxPA/BBOWT Walks update**

So far we have explored possible walks for the new book in the Cherwell Valley, Hinksey meadows, Kennington and around St Clements. please get in touch with Corinne or Sushila if you have ideas for other water meadow walks.

### **Next meetings:**

**June 28th:** Memorial walk for Paul Cullen: meet at 6.30pm on Folly Bridge for Oxford Waterways walk (see **Oxford on Foot**) Tel 779663 for enquiries.  
**July 26th:** Lye Valley walk. Meet at 6.30pm at main entrance Cancer Centre, Churchill Hospital. Tel Siestske on 01865 728153 for enquiries.  
No **August** meeting.

### **Contacts**

**Chair:** Sushila Dhall 790783  
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