

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 47

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Welcome to Issue number 47 of OxPA's Newsletter! Your Newsletter Editor has been struck anew recently by just how marginalized pedestrians are in everyday situations. Walking along any direct route into the town centre, the pedestrian is confined to sloping, bumpy, obstructed, polluted and narrow pavements on either side of smooth, wide, well-drained, unobstructed roads. Due to coming from Europe where people drive on the right hand side of the road, Oxford's buses belch out their fumes right into the queues of people waiting for buses, or walking by. And even in the centre of town (eg. The High St crossing outside the Covered Market) pedestrians wait forever to cross after pressing the pelican button, and then are given too short a crossing time. These discouraging facts have remained unchanged despite our intelligent and ongoing input. Nevertheless, this Newsletter is one of triumph. Read on to see what we have achieved of late!

- 1) Car-Free Day, on Sunday September 22nd, will be the most memorable yet in Oxford. Following intensive hard work by OxPA activist Corinne, the City Council agreed to close Broad Street for the day so that OxPA and Friends of the Earth can host a celebration of public space there. There will be music, local celebrities, food, drink, and stalls from 10am until 4pm. Come along for a day of fun with a serious message.**

- 2) Following OxPA representations sent to OUP's writer of 'Cars; For and Against,' a text intended for school children in classrooms, which seemed to OxPA biased towards car use, the editors have agreed to make changes to the text, firstly to include something about pollution levels inside cars, and also to amend negative references to walking and cycling. A significant triumph, in that OUP has no legal obligation to respond to us positively, and therefore will be doing so because of recognising the rightness of OxPA's objections to the text as it stood.**

- 3) The third reason we have to celebrate is that the City Council's Countryside Officer has agreed to put pedestrian indicators, such as crossings and bridges, on the soon to be re-printed maps of Shotover, Chilswell etc. Up to now the maps have only had car-users' information on them (which is true of many maps actually), so these should in future be useful and cheering to those of us wishing to walk rather than drive in Oxford's countryside.**

- 4) OxPA has wondered for some time what to do with our money (received as donations and subs). We are now looking into donating a bench to the City Centre, with a plaque with our name on it. The centre of Oxford is desperately short of benches, so it would be welcomed. The Parks and Green spaces Officer tells us there is no choice of design if it is for the city centre, but that the City Council would look after the bench, while OxPA would be responsible for the upkeep of the plaque. Anyone handy with a duster and brasso?**

5) Pavement parking. OxPA is sorrowful that after all our work and liaising with Special Constables, there is no evidence of any change in the 'hot-spots' we identified. Officer Peter Mann, who has moved from City to County Council, says they have no policy on pavement parking. **This is not due to an oversight but is a deliberate policy choice** as it is seen as politically sensitive to potentially annoy drivers. **However, for those who would like free Council stickers for pavement parked vehicles, they can obtain some by ringing 815700.** We intend to invite a **representative of CPRE** to a near meeting, as they are also concerned about the issue. Perhaps together we will seem more powerful and work out a way of officially doing something.

6) Transport 2000 are holding a series of FREE seminars around the country, supported by the DLTR. Please ring 020 7613 0743 to find out where those still to run are being held. Apparently they are an important opportunity to hear the latest walking policy and have your voice heard.

7) Despite widespread protests it looks as though coach parking on St Giles is to be made permanent. Sadly, any wide space becomes vehicle space for parked or moving vehicles. Perhaps one day St Giles will be seen as the treasure it is; a beautiful space where there could be a square, a fountain, gardens, stalls, cafes, benches, with a fine walk straight along the middle between St Giles' Church and Martyrs' Memorial. Instead it is a roaring desert of polluting and dangerous through traffic; a testimony to times in which quality of life comes second to more limited considerations.

8) The Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS). Roger Williams (designer of the Station Site road, and consultant to the County Council) seems to be overseeing this. **An OxPA member attended the June meeting and found little concerning pedestrians beyond a vague reference to intentions to 'enhance pedestrian and cycle provision'.** The study seems mainly concerned with buses. Several useful points were raised from the floor, and OxPA filled in a form putting forward our concerns, but we need to see more definite plans to improve things for the thousands of people who walk in the areas concerned.

9) OxPA sent official comments on the temporary traffic orders (allowing the reinstatement of parking) on Broad Street, pointing out that a proper survey ought to be carried out to find out who is parking there and why, that many cars are driving illegally but unhindered through Broad Street because the bollard is always down, that the parking spaces are visually and physically intrusive, and that the Tour Buses pollute Broad St very frequently when they drive down and turn outside the shops.

10) In addition to our stall on Broad Street on September 22nd, OxPA has a stall at the Oxfam Fair in the Town Hall on November 9th. Please come and help or visit, or donate something we can sell or give away in exchange for donations. **Jam, cakes, fudge etc. welcome!**

Our next two meetings are on Mondays September 16th and October 21st, at 7pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!