



## OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 19 JAN/FEB 1998

Welcome to Issue no. 19 of OxPA's Newsletter! My apologies for the error in the last Newsletter, which should of course have been headed Issue 18, not 17. We are now at the beginning of our fourth year since we started, and are beginning to see the beginnings of change due to our pressure. The City Council Cycle Sub-Committee is called the Cycle and Pedestrian Sub-Committee, and we have a voting seat on it. Air pollution and the state of pavements are well on the political agendas, although we still have a long way to go. First those in power will start to say the right things, then, much later, their fine words begin to become reality. I have to make a point here about two phrases which are not fine words and never fail to annoy your Newsletter Editor. I last heard them in a sentence by Roger Williams, Chief Transport Planner on the County Council, telling the Inspector at the Oxford Transport Strategy Public Enquiry what the County has done for pedestrians and cyclists in Oxford. "We have extended our cycle lane provision," he said, "**We now have both shared-use and on-street.**" Shared use means on-pavement, but of course he did not put it like that. I include this vignette just to demonstrate what kind of thinking we are still up against.

1) Many of us are or have been involved in the Oxford Transport Strategy Public Enquiry. Jenny represented OxPA. In our name Jenny raised the question of what ought to be provision for pedestrians (wide, unimpeded, continuous footways) as opposed to what is provided (narrow, badly maintained, impeded, shared with cycles, don't we all know the rest), questioned very well the County method of collecting pedestrian data (they count linear numbers, without looking at the very different way pedestrians move from cars), and the way the Councils pay lip-service to doing things for pedestrians when they don't. Jenny also brought up OxPA's count of how many people are forced off the pavement onto the road when walking in Oxford centre. In one hour OxPA member Mike Hammond counted 51 people who had to walk off the pavement on St Aldates, and 55 for George Street. That is almost one every minute. Patrick and Sushila have also submitted papers to OTS Public Enquiry, opposing the Station Site Road, and are appearing before the Inspector. The outcome of the Enquiry will be reported in the issue of this Newsletter immediately following the Inspector's judgement.

2) It is rumoured that the County is thinking about putting a crossing in front of Worcester College! On February 12th at 10am or shortly after, members of the Highways and Road Safety Sub-Committee on the County Council will again be debating the issue of crossings for pedestrians on the 'inner ring road' especially at Death Row Crossing in front of Worcester College, leading to Gloucester Green. Other dangerous non-crossings included in the debate will be the junction of Beaumont St/St John's St, St Giles, and the University area. Last time this was debated Councillors, encouraged by Officers, laughed at the idea of slowing the traffic for pedestrians, because none have ever been killed at any of these places. Now we have a new elected group of Councillors, so hopefully it will be taken more seriously this time. Members of the public are welcome to attend and listen. If this reaches you in time and you would like to speak on the item you can do so by requesting to speak at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. You will be allowed to speak for five minutes.

3) An elderly lady called Miss Enid Jeeves, who was a friend of the National Pedestrians' Association for the last 40 years left a bequest to the Association of £200,000. We remember her with gratitude, and hope this good fortune will have some effect on the work we do here in Oxford.

4) **On February 16th at our OxPA meeting in the Town Hall at 7.30pm, Graham Smith (local Cyclist Touring Club) will be coming and we will talk about cycling and walking.** There is currently so much tension between pedestrians and cyclists that we are going to see if we can find a way forward that is less combative. Both walking and cycling are quiet, non-polluting methods of transport. Both need somewhere



to go that does not bring them into conflict with motorised vehicles or one another. Councillors who authorise white lines on pavements and 'shared use' pathways are partly the cause of the tension, so perhaps if together we prepare a statement to go to the two Councils about this that would be a beginning.

**5) Jenny and Margaret are organising a Social following the wonderful success of our last one. It is to be on Monday March 30th, in St Michael's Hall, Cornmarket, like the last one, at 7.30. Everyone is welcome. Please bring a friend and something nice to eat.**

6) Patrick has put in a fuller report of OTS Public enquiry, so here it is: I have been sitting in as many of the sessions of the Oxford Transport Strategy Public Inquiry as possible. To set the scene, there is the Inspector (male) sitting in the Mayor's chair, to his left there is the lawyer (also male) for the Council surrounded by boxes of files, immediately in front of the Inspector sits the witness, and there are about 15 to 25 people in the audience (mostly the same people, including a couple who have recently moved to Oxford and are coming for the free entertainment!). The objectors (because unless you support everything that the Council plans to do, you are an objector) fall into 2 different camps - on one side, those who object to the closure of High Street and the whole strategy, and on the other, those who support the pedestrianisation of Cornmarket and closure of High Street, but are worried that the Council is going about other parts of the strategy in a muddle headed way. Of the second and larger group, there are certain common complaints. First there are the small shops, worried about their delivery 'lorries. Secondly, there are certain areas like Divinity Road and Oxpens, worried about displaced traffic. Thirdly, there are several groups calling for Longwall Street to be closed, because of worries about the predicted increase of traffic along a narrow unsuitable street. Fourthly, several groups are complaining about the proposed four lane road to be built by Oxford Station, on the grounds it will increase traffic, worsen air pollution and destroy the LMS rail station. Finally, there are people calling for Queen Street to be pedestrianised because there will be more buses and the situation is already unbearable.

Anyway to return to procedure, the witness can first question the officers of the Council. The officers are Roger Williams, the chief transport officer, who is wily and slippery and will avoid any difficult questions; Mike Rant, chief engineer, who will try to bamboozle any questioner with lots of facts (most of which are irrelevant); Peter Mann, city planning officer, who insists everything has been thoroughly consulted on and so why is one asking questions; Tony Payne, environmental health officer, who alone acquits himself well, giving as honest answers as possible about the dangers of air pollution on people's health; and finally, Professor Phillip Goodwin, who delights in discussions about transport, but will not be drawn on what the Council is planning, in case he accidentally criticises the Councils' proposals. Then the objector takes the witness seat him or herself and reads out a summary of evidence. Then, s/he may be questioned by the Council lawyer. Sometimes he just asks a few short questions, but if he thinks that your evidence threatens the Council case, he will grill you as fiercely as possible.

As for OxPA evidence, Jenny questioned Roger Williams and Mike Rant. Her questioning was impressive, based on a lot of research among the enormous library of documents. She even got R. Williams to admit that the amount of research on pedestrians had been inadequate. She exposed some of M. Rant's car-oriented pre-conceptions, such as that building a four lane road and not providing crossings will force pedestrians to take a diversion to get to the station. Her own summary of evidence was delivered in a clear measured way, and made such an eminently reasonable request, that a greater consideration be given to pedestrians as a means of transport, rather than just as a hassle or safety problem when pedestrians cross roads.

**Our next two meetings are on Monday Feb 16th and Monday March 16th, at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Please come, everybody is welcome, and please feel free to bring a friend or anyone interested.**

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