



## OXFORD PEDESTRIANS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 20 MARCH/APRIL 1998

Welcome to Issue no 20 of our Newsletter! It has been a busy two months, with our Social, and a meeting between Graham Smith of the Cyclists Touring Club and OxPA at our February meeting, and the annual City Council Pedestrians' Forum. The latter was impressively well-attended, demonstrating that for every member of OxPA there are **at least** ten pedestrians who care about walking issues, but rarely speak up.

1) The question of whether there should be a Pedestrian Officer on one or both of the Councils came up at the Pedestrian and Cycle Sub-Committee. Roger Geffan of the County Council said it is a Good Idea for officers to generally keep pedestrian issues in the front of their minds (if only they would!) but he is against having a Pedestrian Officer. Alex Hollingsworth, City Councillor said everything is being re-organised so we should 'wait till it settles,' and then they'll see. Brian Keene, another City Councillor said the best place for us is the Access Committee, which deals with disabilities! Nigel Coates, a sympathetic City Officer, says he is a Pedestrian Officer 'by default.' So whilst the issue remains on the agenda, we are still quite a way from our goal of a Pedestrian Officer on each of the Councils, someone whose job would be to walk along routes which we all use, and assess how they may be improved.

2) Patrick put into the Pedestrian and Cycle Sub-Committee an analysis of pedestrian delay on the proposed Station Site road. **Overall general pedestrian delay will increase from 3,000 to 44,000 seconds delay per hour.** The problem will be waiting for the lights at the proposed pelican crossings to change. Each wait will be for up to 50 seconds. Outside Tescos on Cowley Road is the only Oxford crossing where maximum waiting time is only 20 seconds. **To help OxPA make a case for Puffin crossings, which are more pedestrian responsive, please could members help by timing (a) times waited at crossings, and (b) crossing times.** And if anyone would like any specific or general issue raised at the Pedestrian and Cycle Sub-Committee, please contact Corrinne, Patrick, or Jenny (numbers at end of Newsletter).

3) There was to have been a Car-Free week in Oxford, due to start on May 10th. But the City wants to change the name to something softer like 'Better Travel Week' or 'Healthier Travel Week.' Rachel Gover of Travelwise in the County Council has decided the day should be focused on buses as the alternative to driving. But we would like to use it to promote OxPA and the advantages of walking, especially for shorter journeys.

4) At our February meeting Graham Smith drew together the needs of pedestrians and cyclists. 'Obstructions' (local shops, pedestrians and cyclists) have been taken from 'main roads' over the last 40 years so traffic can go faster. Thousands of local shops are lost each year. Local shops on main roads now believe they need traffic, therefore pedestrians are up against the beliefs of local shop owners. The needs of pedestrians and cyclists are very similar, which creates tension as those in power force us to compete for the same space. Cynics in the field believe that conflict between pedestrians and cyclists has been encouraged to distract attention from cars and how much space they take up. In Germany and Holland pedestrians, cyclists and cars have separate ways, which is what we could do with here. But here motorised vehicles have the centre of the highway, and pedestrians and cyclists are forced to share what are called in transport planning terms 'hard edges' ie. pavements.

5) **Calling pedestrians in Headington! Please observe the alterations to the bus-lane on London Road. You are invited to send comments to the City Council by August 3rd this year.**

6) **The second meeting of the Pedestrians' Forum took place in the Town Hall on April 1st.** It began with a presentation by Cllr John Tanner and one of the City Environmental Officers. The Station Site Road



was missing from the plans. although it is said to be a 'key plank' of OTS, without which the pedestrianisation of Cornmarket could not go ahead. When this was queried, the new four-lane road was said to be 'a detail.' Why is it missing from most of the plans if it is so vital? Why does the pedestrianisation of Cornmarket depend on a road for which listed building consent (to remove the old LMS building) has not yet been obtained? Something strange is afoot here. The Rickshaw Company representative then asked why they cannot be licensed like taxis. She was told there is no identified unmet demand for cycle rickshaws. Jenny then pointed out that we were talking about everything except pedestrians, and got a round of applause. However then everyone began attacking cyclists who cycle across Cornmarket, and this unfortunately took up a lot of time. There were questions about widened junctions around Oxford centre where buses will go faster and endanger pedestrians accessing the City Centre on foot. Apparently the road and junction widening is nothing to do with the City but is the County's responsibility. But if buses do go too fast they might narrow roads, however details of this will not be looked at until the results of OTS public inquiry come back. Needs were raised, for a pedestrian bridge on Folly Bridge, and a crossing on Queen Street (St Ebbes end). Apparently the bridge is still in the programme, but the officer could not remember what year it is planned for. A crossing on Queen Street is something which can be looked into. The all-important issue of pedestrians breathing pollution came up, but no solutions were suggested. OTS will ease it on Cornmarket, but pollution will increase on Queen Street, St Aldates, George Street, the main shopping part of High Street and the Station area. In all these places pollution levels are already dangerously high, posing a real threat to the long-term health of anyone who lives, works, studies or shops in any of these areas. **John Kramer, City Officer invites people to ring him on 252266 if they see any bus sitting at stops with their engines running. Take the number of the bus, the time, and the company if possible.** Jenny pointed out that everything we are concerned about is said to be 'a detail.' But 99% of the population walks even if just from the car to Boots. 61% of journeys under two miles are walked. Patrick said that pedestrians are angry because they have been at the 'bottom of the heap' for so long. Whole departments are devoted to cars, and we have not even got an officer to represent us. John Tanner summed up: (a) A wide pedestrian area is needed in the City Centre, (b) Pedestrians need to be able to access this safely and pleasantly without pollution, (c) When there is conflict between pedestrians and cyclists, the latter should give way, and (d) Buses can make life worse in pedestrian areas and need to be properly kept under control. So the pedestrian voice was heard at this meeting, and we can now wait to see if anything comes of this on the ground.

7) OxPA records thanks to Margaret for her work trying to establish links with the Headington Business Community.

8) OxPA also thanks Ben, Jenny's son, for saving the day when Jenny was unwell on the evening of the OxPA Social. Despite many people being away or otherwise unable to attend it was a successful and enjoyable event, because Ben did all the shopping and setting up, and was cheery and welcoming. The Social would not have been the same without him! He even ran the quiz Jenny had written, so we all emerged the wiser. Did you know, for example, that about half the people killed on roads are *not* in vehicles, that there are 18 bones in the human foot, and that 6000 pedestrians per hour walk along Cornmarket on weekdays?

**Our next two meetings are on Monday April 20th and Monday May 18th, at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Please come, everybody is welcome, and please feel free to bring a friend or anyone interested.**

#### Contact Numbers

Tony Cox (Membership Secretary).....279510

Jenny Linsdell (Chairperson).....246073

Margaret Hodson (Headington Contact).....763597

Patrick Lingwood (Technical Advisor) and Sushila Dhall (Newsletter Editor)...553415

Corinne Grimley-Evans (Press Officer).....779663

#### Address of National Pedestrians Association

126 Aldersgate Street LONDON EC1A 4JQ (tel 0171 490 0750)