

Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 23 SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1998

Welcome to Issue no. 23 of our Newsletter! We are now almost four years old and going strong. But to give two recent examples of the sorts of things we are still up against; your Newsletter Editor attended a presentation by Marcus Laphorn, City Centre Manager, who handed round copies of the map of Oxford City Centre which is made available to tourists and visitors to Oxford. An 'inner ring route' for private cars is coloured yellow, and designates narrow residential streets like Longwall Street and Hythe Bridge Street as 'major roads' like Oxpens. The 'footways' are in pink, and include congested polluted Cornmarket and Queen Street, as well as a host of other tiny roads which do not really connect up or lead anywhere. Walking is seen as a meander for fun, not as a means of getting anywhere, where drivers are carefully channelled along the most convenient routes for them, notwithstanding the needs of other people in those areas. The second example is your Newsletter Editor has recently been pushing a friend in a wheelchair from his home to the shops and back. Uneven paving stones, sloping pavements, inconvenient crossings (or none at all), steps and puddles are all almost impossible obstacles to both the wheelchair user and the person pushing. We still have a very long way to go in educating those who spend our taxes on roads and footways!

- 1) **Stalls. On November 14th we have a stall at the One World Fair in Oxford Town Hall, From 10am to 4.30pm.** Please come and spend an hour or so sitting at our stall, which is fun and means meeting lots of nice people, or bake a cake or something for OxPA to sell.

2) **There were in all 700 responses to the National Association's Best/Worst Pavement Campaign.** Here is a breakdown of the most common problems: **77% mentioned the poor quality of pavements; 20% mentioned car parking on pavements; 17% cyclists on pavements; 13% cable television etc. digging up pavements; 7% dog dirt; 7% overhanging trees/bushes, and 5% mentioned big puddles.** Readers may be interested to know, in the light of the fact that Com Tel has fairly recently dug up almost every pavement in the City to lay cables, that the City Council, some years ago, sold the right to ComTel to do so, **apparently specifying that the pavement, and not the road, was to be dug up wherever possible.** Oxford got a lot of publicity over the best/worst pavements campaign, thanks to our thriving and active local Pedestrians' Association.

3) **Calling all photographers,** as amateur as you like! If any of you see any vehicle representing a local council or a national company, eg. the Police, the Post Office, British Telecom, RAC, Securicor, etc. please send a picture to Jenny (address at end of Newsletter). She is collecting a list for the National Pedestrians' Association, who is compiling a portfolio of pavement parkers setting a bad example. They intend to publish the photos and use them to make advances in the cause of **liberating pavements for pedestrians.**

4) **A vote of thanks goes to Ray for contacting every Councillor in Oxfordshire with the Pedestrian Association's 'Pedestrian Awareness' leaflet.** All members of OxPA should confidently write to their Councillors regarding any problems encountered whilst walking, as they have now all been alerted to the issues.

5) **Cycle lanes on pavements by bus shelters.** They either get between pedestrians and the road where they get off the bus as on Woodstock Road and in Headington, or they veer on the pavement from one side to another as on Abingdon and Botley Roads. The greatest danger here is to pedestrians who are blind, partially sighted, or hard of hearing, as cyclists can be both fast and virtually silent. This is an issue raised by members of OxPA over and over again when speaking or writing to Council Officers, so far to no avail.



Ideally if roads are too dangerous to cycle on due to heavy or fast traffic, the danger, ie. the traffic, should be slowed or moderated, rather than the danger shifted to a different group of public highway users. Failing that there should at least be signs and rumble strips to alert cyclists to the potential conflict, and make them slow down at places where there may be a collision.

6) Those people who find air pollution troublesome may find it useful to telephone the City Council Environmental Health Dept., Thomas Hull House, Bonn Square; **on Oxford 252272**, and ask for pollution figures. There should be a chart showing fluctuations in air pollution on some central streets of Oxford. If you do not get a straight and satisfactory response then contact your local Councillor(s).

7) The next meeting of the City Pedestrian and Cycle Sub-Committee is on Friday October 16th. Members of the public can sit in on meetings of Committees and Sub-Committees, but may not participate in them. Please contact Corinne or Patrick (details at end of Newsletter) if there is ever any issue you would like them to raise.

8) As part of Oxford Transport Strategy a footway to Oxford railway station is being constructed. It goes along the east side of Park End St., up a ramp alongside the new carpark there, across a bridge over Botley Rd., and down a ramp into the station. It was pointed out to the Planners that this does not follow pedestrian desire lines in the area, and in fact adds distance for pedestrians. The reply was that they are 'creating new pedestrian desire lines'.

Sadly, two of the three 1930's horse chestnut trees next to the new footway are to be sawn down as part of the next phase of Botley Road's widening towards the notorious proposed new station site road. Perhaps one day will see the verdant vision of dozens of trees and no traffic in the station area as shown in the posters advertising the proposal. But for now the area looks more and more like a concrete desert. No longer surrounded by the mature plane trees which were so much a part of its setting, the recently-painted LMS Station Building stands exposed, a dignified relic of our history, behind a new security fence.

9) If any member of OxPA has any news from their part of the City which they would like in this Newsletter, please feel free to contact your Newsletter Editor (details below).

10) Note that enclosed with this Newsletter are a couple of useful items: **'Don't Take Footway Falls Lying Down'**, and a nationally produced **Pavement Report Card**. More of these are available on request. It is hoped members will find them useful.

Our next two meetings are on Monday October 19th, and Monday November 16th, at 7.30pm, in Oxford Town Hall. Please come, even if you have never attended before, and feel free to bring a friend or any interested person. Everybody is welcome!

Contact Numbers

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

Jenny Linsdell (Chairperson).....246079

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)