

# Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER JULY-AUGUST 1999  
ISSUE NO. ~~28~~ 27

Welcome to Issue number 28 of Oxford Pedestrians Association newsletter! This newsletter comes typed courtesy of Jenny, our Chair, as your Newsletter Editor has broken her leg and cannot access her computer.

Having a broken leg means becoming a different, yet more vulnerable kind of pedestrian. In a wheelchair one becomes acutely aware of every bump, every crossfall, and every obstacle. There are endless numbers of all of these on all pavements. The smoothest and easiest part of the public highway is the middle of the road, and we all know whose territory that is. Also pollution from exhaust becomes more of a problem to someone low down. Altogether a broken leg is a valuable learning experience for a pedestrian interested in the mobility of all footway users.

## Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS)

Members will be aware that this was to come into effect on May 30th. It duly did and it is a great relief to be able to walk and breathe without fear or danger on Cornmarket Street and the west end of Broad Street. High Street is also quieter and more pleasant.

However, the OTS has its downside too...the Station Site has become a dangerous and heavily polluted area, without the relief previously afforded by the mature roadside plane trees on Park End Street. Crossings are inconveniently placed as OXPA and others have been saying from the beginnings of OTS time that they would be. The pedestrians' lights are confusingly sited, they don't bleep, and where there are two stages to a crossing the green man for the second part beckons you across when, actually, the first part is red. There are so many other unsatisfactory things that it would be tedious to subject you to the list. Suffice it to say that it is NOT a pedestrians' paradise. (Spare a thought here for the cyclists among us, it is dangerous, inconvenient and fast becoming an anarchical mess - Jenny).

All along the new 'inner ring route' it is heavily congested with cars, usually one driver and no passengers in each, with grim expressions as if determined to overcome the traffic jams by force of will and driving in daily. Hopefully some will give up and change to other modes of transport soon.

However, the 'inner ring route' (Oxpens, Hythe Bridge Street, Worcester Street, Beaumont Street, St. Giles, Parks Road) sorely needs pedestrian facilities as soon as possible. These have been verbally promised but so far there is no sign of them. There has been pavement sliced away to widen roads at the bottom of George Street (north and south side), and in front of Blackwells on Hythe Bridge Street. These pavements now measure less than two metres. There are non-statutory guidelines for the width of roads and pavements, but at huge expense the Councils widen roads to statutory guidelines and narrow pavements below them. There is a new crossing halfway down Hythe Bridge Street where no-one much wants to cross; most pedestrians are on the Station-City Centre route. The crossing at the end of Parks Road going into Banbury Road is perfect, on a desire line. Why can't they all be like that? In the Science Area the pedestrian crossings are good too, but there is still an urgent need for one in front of University Parks, and one in front of Worcester College. Walking along Longwall Street there is scarcely any pavement on either side - it is a nightmare.

At the June OXPA meeting it was agreed that it would be good to put together a post-OTS pedestrians' dossier. It needs another few weeks for the OTS changes to settle down so that we have a clear picture of the situation but if anybody can contribute comments, observations, photographs they would be very welcome.



**2) On August 20th a motion will be put before the County Council Highways and Road Safety Sub-committee for debate.** It calls for drivers to be warned and re-educated about driving more slowly and carefully where there are likely to be children on or near the roads. It argues that the emphasis is far too solely placed on educating children about road safety, and that young children are unable to use streets as 'safely' as adults. The motion calls for the introduction of Home Zones (where the local people and children can use and play in their streets) in Oxfordshire. Should anyone wish to speak on behalf of OXPA at the meeting, please would they ring Ann Lowe at County Hall on 01865 [ ] 792422.

**3) OXPA has £250 in its account.** Any ideas for using this usefully - social event, demonstration, picnic..let Jenny, Corinne, Sushila know and we can discuss it at the next meeting.

**4) OXPA notes that there was no Pedestrian Forum this year.** Surely City Councillors would not let such a marvellous opportunity to hear the views of pedestrians lie fallow? Please urge your own councillors to ensure the meeting takes place - it happens little enough as it is.

**5) Pedestrian Officer Campaign.** Alex Hollingsworth, City Council Chair of Highways and Traffic Committee decided to vote down creating a Pedestrian Officer post. Jenny wrote to him but the reply was very unsatisfactory. He considers that all the officers are/should be aware of pedestrian needs and that to give the responsibility to one officer would marginalise the issue. OXPA considers that the logic is the exact opposite and that in reality no-one takes on the responsibility.

**6) Roadworks.** The issue of pedestrian access and safety whilst roadworks are going on was debated at County Environment Committee, which denied responsibility for this, saying "the contractors are responsible for safety". In the end it seems that the police, officers, councillors, traffic wardens, workmen are all not responsible and think someone else is. (and during the OTS and water works OXPA has contacted all of them several times!)

**7) The issue of pavement parking was the subject of a written report by David Young, Director of County Environmental Services.** It advises that the best way forward "is to do nothing". This makes your Newsletter Editor's blood heat up somewhat. Even the police park on pavements. Some disabled drivers also habitually park on pavements, heedless of the wheelchairs, pedestrians and disabled car-free people who may need to pass. This is an issue requiring action.

**8) Please contact your Newsletter Editor if you have anything you would like included in the Newsletter or if you have suggestions, complaints etc.**

Our next meeting is Monday July 19th at 7.30p.m. in Oxford Town Hall. Please come and bring a friend, everyone is welcome.

**\*\*Please contact Jenny before the August meeting to check if there is one\*\***

#### **Contact Numbers**

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

**Jenny Linsdell (Chairperson).....246079**

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

**Corinne Grimley-Evans (Cycling and Pedestrian Sub-committee).....779663**

**National Pedestrians Association**

**3rd Floor, 31-33 Bondway, Vauxhall, London SW8 1SJ Tel. 0171 820 1010**