

OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 57
MAY/JUNE 2004

Welcome to Issue number 57 of OxPA's Newsletter! Now that the sun is showing its face again, perhaps it is the time for a pleasant tow-path walk to one of the pubs with gardens near the river? On second thoughts, perhaps not, unless you have non-slip wellingtons, an excellent sense of balance, very good eyesight, and no wheelchair, pushchair, sticks or crutches! Whilst Abingdon Road and Cornmarket are yet again being resurfaced, the tow-path along its heavily pedestrian and cyclist-using length is a mass of deep, wide pools of water, thick slippery mud, and loose shingle. Add to this large chunks of pathway fallen into the river or dangerously subsiding, and you have Oxford's tow-path. By this lack of attention the true value of non-motorised forms of transport to Thames Water and the County Council is made obvious.

Nevertheless we have had a positive and hopeful two months. Even if action on the ground is not there, thinking is still moving in the right direction.

1) Our well-attended April meeting hosted two excellent and entertaining speakers; Dr Andrew Chivers, Chair of Oxford Executive Council Primary Care Trust, and Mr Tim Chapman, from Public Health. Grateful thanks to both for their inspiring presentations. We learned interesting facts, such as: 1) we do no more journeys than we did in 1971, but fewer are taken on foot or by bicycle, and more are by car. 2) The average distance we walk on an ordinary outing is just over half a mile. The average person walks 200 miles a year, **but in order to become a society of healthy members we need to walk an average of 550 miles a year. This can be achieved by half an hour a day.** 3) The metabolic rate amongst those who walk is twice that of those who do not. 4) Amazingly, **regardless of smoking or weight, walking briskly and regularly halves your rate of heart disease!** 5) **Two thirds of people in this country do not take enough exercise.** 6) Communities with high levels of walking tend to be cohesive and warm, but once lost from a community that sense is very hard to get back. 7) The way children get to school correlates with their weight and fitness. 8) **If you take exercise before an operation you will recover more quickly.** 9) Pollution inside cars is worse than on the outside, although people tend to feel themselves safer inside a vehicle. 10) Walking is excellent exercise for back pain. 11) In terms of osteoporosis, bones are living parts of the body. The more you stress them the stronger they get. **Being an astronaut is the worst thing for bones, and sitting down is the next worst.** 12) Exercise should be part of ones daily routine rather than something one tacks on at the end, like going to a gym. Most people give up attending gyms within three months of joining. 13) **In general, people who exercise live longer than those who do not.**

On a national level there is apparently 'a degree of panic' about rising levels of heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. Although the Walking Strategy has not yet been published it is known that we need a healthier population. But many people feel housebound because of streets that are difficult and dangerous to walk on. The Health Walks aim to turn this around for some of those who otherwise would not walk at all, but political input is needed to ensure walking routes are flat, unobstructed, safe and continuous. **If members would like to get involved in the National Walking consultation you can e-mail jackie.wilderspin@oxfordcity-pct.nhs.uk. Or telephone Oxford 226785, or 226787. Post-A-Pothole cards are available for roads or pavements from the Town Hall or Ramsey House.**

- 2) **The perennial issue of pavement parking.** Once again we are informed that it is not an offence to park on the pavement, but only an offence if obstruction can be proven. **However, powers under Section 1 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 mean pavement parking bans can be installed,** appropriately signed. They would then need to be enforced by the police unless as in Oxford since 1997, the Council employs private parking attendants. **Therefore we would not need put up with the misery of obstructed pavements in Oxford if the political will to change things was there.**
- 3) **Regarding the lights at the end of Cornmarket,** Samantha Tharme of Oxfordshire County Council says that at the latest OTS meeting there was ‘general support for the lights, including from the OxPA representative.’ But our representative tells us the scheme was outlined to members without any indication that input could be given at that stage. **Democracy in action is what let us down.** The lights are apparently ‘under review’ but no date has been set for a review. **When asked about the nature of the review we were told that ‘engineers who service the lights will be keeping an eye on how they are functioning’!**
- 4) **OTS Working Party said ‘there is no support for a light-controlled crossing across the middle of Beaumont Street, and officers recommended that the scheme not be proceeded with’.** But Cllr David Robertson subsequently said that **the OTS programme for ’04-’05 includes a crossing on Beaumont Street.** Apparently this will not be light-controlled (which is fine; a zebra would be better all around) but in the near future something to facilitate crossing for pedestrians and cyclists will be consulted on.
- 5) **Oxfordshire County Council’s new Director of Transport, Mr David MacKibben, will be coming to our May meeting to answer our questions about the way forward in Oxford for pedestrians.** Please display the enclosed poster, and come to the meeting. We need to establish a good working relationship with him from the beginning.
- 6) **On Saturday June 12th OxPA has a stall at the Greenpeace Fair in Wesley Memorial Church Hall, New Inn Hall Street, from 10am to 4pm. Please contact Michaela (number at end of Newsletter) with offers of help, or donations.** Sitting at our stall for an hour or two is a worthy and enjoyable way to spend time, meeting people, chatting about pedestrians and OxPA, and getting new members!
- 7) **OxPA representatives attended the consultation of Banbury/Woodstock Roads corridor study, phase 1.** It offers a choice between two schemes for Banbury Road; one which would increase bus speeds southwards and slow them northwards, and an alternative with pedestrian crossings and traffic islands at regular intervals in and around Summertown. One scheme would widen the road through Summertown, the other would restrict it. **The real winners are motorists, who, whatever else may happen, are to get a clear lane either way in the middle.** No overall scheme was proposed for Woodstock Road.

Our next two meetings are on Mondays, May 17th & June 21st, at 7pm in St Aldates Centre, Pembroke Street. Please come and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!

Contact number and e-mail address
National Pedestrians Association (Living Streets) 0207 820 1010
www.livingstreets.org.uk