



Walk Talk

Newsletter of Oxford Pedestrians Association

April 2011

Welcome to Newsletter 97 of the Oxford Pedestrians Association

With the beginning of Spring we start a season of outdoor activities! Dates for the first of these are given below, further events will be posted on the website and details sent out by email and letter. We look forward to meeting members and friends at all these sociable events.

Nature Walks

We are planning a joint project with BBOWT (Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) to produce a new book of walks featuring Oxford's floodplain meadows and urban nature trails. Athene Reiss of BBOWT came to our March meeting to talk about the campaign to promote public interest and enjoyment of Oxford's water meadows, which are rich in wildlife and support important ecosystems. Athene brought maps from which we worked out a series of walks that everybody is welcome to join. The idea is for OxPA members to plan and describe the walks (of 3-8 miles) which will all include some riverside meadows. Each walk will be defined by carefully drawn maps, and illustrations will be provided by our artist member Mike Hamand. BBOWT will provide nature notes to go with each walk.

Walks proposed so far are:

(1) Sunday April 3rd Kennington. Meet at 2.15pm at Bagley Wood Road bus stop. Contact Marguerite (tel 735471).

(2) Tuesday April 26th at 7pm meet opposite the fountain on the north side of Magdalen Bridge for the St Clements walk, led by Keith (tel 515879) (note that this is our April meeting).

(3) Sunday May 8th at 2.30pm meet at the entrance to the University Parks on Parks Road opposite Keble College for the River Cherwell Walk led by Sushila (tel 790783).

(4) Sunday May 22nd at 2.30pm meet Felicity (tel 251212) for the Hinksey Meadow walk) at what was once the Waterman's Arms but is now The Punter in Osney Island.

Further walks during the summer will include: Risinghurst/Shotover; Boundary Brook; Cutteslowe/Water Eaton; Iffley; Cumnor to Botley via Raleigh Park, Lye Valley, and Port Meadow to Wolvercote, which can be lengthened to include Farmoor Reservoir. Please consider leading one of these walks. They should be sociable and good fun as well as having a useful aim. To contact Athene at BBOWT please email: athenereiss@bbowt.org.uk or contact Sushila or Corinne if you wish to send Athene a message but do not have email.

Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round a Pavement Obstruction!

Some 14 years ago in OxPA's early days we walked through the city centre tying ribbons around pavement obstructions, such as A-boards, poles, bicycles, and even vehicles, to draw

attention to the problems these create every day for pedestrians getting about town. Now we will do this again, to ask the question whether anything has changed since then. **On Saturday April 9th at 11am we plan to meet outside the Town Hall** and walk up St Aldates, along High St to Turl St, then to Broad St, George St, New Inn Hall St, and Queen St. Members are needed to tie ribbons and hand out flyers. We hope to get the press along, and raise awareness, in an enjoyable way, of the difficulties pavement obstacles present. Please come along. Contact Sushila or Corinne with any queries about the Ribbon Walk. We hope this will be the first of several, focussing on urban shopping centres in Oxford.

Living Streets' Walk to Work Week (9-13 May) is just around the corner. Walk to Work Week this year is running as part of the first ever National Walking Month in the UK. Living Streets and Walk England are joining forces to promote walking at school, at work and in the community. Throughout the month, Living Streets will be urging people across the country to take to the streets and walk their way to a healthier and happier lifestyle. As OxPA members know, walking is the cheapest, simplest, and one of the most effective forms of exercise that a person can do. Just half an hour's walk each morning can transform your fitness levels, reduce stress and anxiety, and vastly improve your concentration ability for the day ahead. It's easy, it's affordable and it works.

However, these benefits seem to be ignored or unappreciated by many. Only 11% of commuters walk to work, with a large majority using their cars instead. A quarter of the population admit that they walk for 20 minutes less than once a year. And over the

past couple of decades, the number of children walking to school has fallen sharply. Forty three per cent of children are now driven to school despite the fact that the majority of primary school children live within a mile and a half of their school.

"Wherever I go in the world, a clear sign of backwardness and lack of democracy is cars parked on sidewalks" Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor of Bogotá and President of the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy.

The Government is making it easier for councils to tackle pavement parking. Vehicles parked on pavements can cause problems for people in wheelchairs, with visual impairments, or pushchairs, or just holding hands. The Regional and Local Transport Minister Norman Baker has written to councils prompting them to use their powers to prevent parking on the pavement where it is a problem. Along with the letter, the Department for Transport has given all councils in England permission to use signs to indicate a local pavement parking ban. Until now councils have had to gain special signs authorization from central Government each time they want to put a pavement parking ban in place. Pavement parking is illegal in London.

Next meetings:

April 26: St Clements walk (see above).
May 24: 7pm Town Hall. "Good Journey?" with guest speaker Deborah Whelan, OCC disability specialist.

Contacts

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