



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 23: September 2017

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

In taking over the Chairmanship from Jim Parke, I am very conscious of his achievements over the last four years, in particular researching and applying to the Blue Plaque Board for D'Arcy Dalton to be acknowledged for his great contributions: being a founder member of OFS, with roles from assistant secretary to Honorary Secretary over a period of more than 50 years; his involvement with CPRE as Chairman; and attending Court to ensure that to the footpaths of Oxfordshire remained open. Thank you, Jim, for all the work which this involved. He and I have swapped roles as he is now Walks Organiser and I am sure he will do an excellent job.

As we walk along the footpaths around the county, I have become aware that there are a considerable number of stiles that are less than adequate. The Society, therefore, has funded gates on the

OxfordshireWay,(Waterstock and Fawley) as well as at North Leigh. Nick Moon, in surveying the Oxfordshire Way for a new edition of a guidebook, has already pinpointed more which need replacing. New gates replacing broken stiles, enable easier access so more people can enjoy the countryside, especially those with limited mobility. The Society is a registered charity and one of the obligations of a charity is that it should provide 'public good'. So I trust that in the years to come we will see many more gates on walks with plaques indicating that they were donated by OFS. This will, incidentally, act as further publicity for the Society. If you know of any stiles which need replacing then please don't hesitate to let me or one of the committee know.

ELIZABETH ADAMS

Wytton Perowne d'Arcy Dalton – THE UNVEILING OF THE BLUE PLAQUE

On a sunny Friday, 18th August, 2017, 40 people, including our President, Sir Hugo Brunner, the Chairmen of the South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse District Councils, officers from the Countryside Access Team of the County Council, and the CPRE, assembled in Great Milton beside the garden wall of the Limes, formerly known as Wyverns, the home of d'Arcy Dalton, former President of the Oxford Fieldpaths Society to witness the unveiling of

a Blue Plaque dedicated to his memory as the Champion and Protector of the Public Rights of Way in Oxfordshire.

Professor Robert Evans, the Chairman of the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board opened the proceedings, pointing out that it was fitting that the plaque overlooked a public right of way and would therefore be seen by anyone walking the path alongside the house where d'Arcy himself had lived.

In 1913 d'Arcy came up to Lincoln College as an undergraduate, from Birmingham King Edward's School, only graduating after service in WW1 interrupted his studies, and thereafter maintaining his connection with

the college until well after WW2 . One of the invited guests, Alan Montgomery, himself a graduate of the College, recalled that d’Arcy was a well-known figure in the College where he was President of the Junior Common Room.

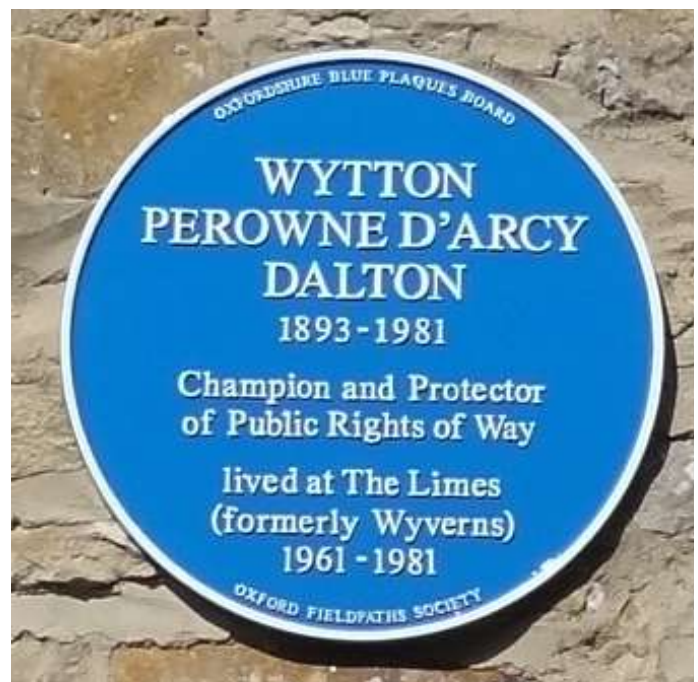
In 1926 d’Arcy Dalton joined the newly formed Oxford and District Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Society and was appointed as Honorary Assistant Secretary, devoting himself to ensuring that as many as possible of the footpaths represented on maps in Oxfordshire were indeed public rights of way; not, as OS Maps stated, *‘The representation on this map of a Road, Track or Footpath is no evidence of the existence of a right of way’*.

His devotion to the protection of Public Rights of Way through research and attendance at over 130 full-day hearings meant he was instrumental in saving many miles of PRowS which otherwise would have been lost to the succeeding generations of walkers and horse riders who use and enjoy them today, and will continue to do so in the years to come.

It is interesting to note that the Ordnance Survey includes on its Explorer and Landranger map conventional signs showing those paths which are Public Rights of Way. These are shown in green or red and are based on information supplied by the Local Authority. It also states that: *‘The representation on this map of ANY OTHER road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way’*. Only two additional words - but what a difference!

In 1959 d’Arcy Dalton became Chairman of the OFS, and in 1977 President, serving in this capacity until his death in 1981. In 1986 to celebrate the 40th year of the founding of the

OFS, the Society inaugurated the long-distance 67-mile recreational route named in his honour. Jim Parke, the prime mover in organising the award of the plaque, then unveiled the Plaque to a round of applause. This was followed by refreshment at the Bull Inn where there was a display of information relating to d’Arcy Dalton, including a copy of the 1933 map (the original work of the society as mentioned in the 2016 Newsletter). Then a short walk was taken around footpaths in the area, including a special route across private land at Chilworth Farm in recognition, by the owner, of such an auspicious occasion for the Society, Undaunted by a sudden downpour, it was generally agreed that the day had gone very well. Close neighbours of d’Arcy, who knew him well, expressed their pleasure that he was being honoured in this way saying that



this wonderful man would have been extremely proud to be the recipient of the prestigious Blue Plaque.

DERWENTWATER, SEPT 2016: HF HOUSE – DERWENT BANK

The first two days we had rather wet walks



but on Thursday we started our easy walk around Buttermere with clear views of the



stunning mountain scenery lit up by the sun. As we walked up to view the valley, water was trickling down all the tracks. We had been told that water was still 'weeping from the crags' after the floods earlier in the year and so it seemed.

The reward was panoramic views of crags and tarns including a waterfall dropping 700 metres, Red Pike and White Pike, with the sun appearing to light each in turn as the clouds moved past. After descending to the

pretty village of Buttermere we walked round the mere with a short section in a very dark tunnel and an interesting mini rock climb where the lake seemed to have overflowed. Part of the walk was through pretty woodland with ever changing views of both the mere and the mountains. Across from the mere Haystacks were visible, the favourite crags of Wainwright whose ashes are scattered there.

A sudden short sharp shower caught us as we were under the trees, minutes before arriving at the cosy café in Buttermere. The bus ride home took us through narrow lanes edged with mossy stone walls alongside tarns and fields of Herdwick sheep.

Words & photos: Anne Partridge

Picture our days...



We are poor little lambs that have gone astray...



"Climb every mountain"



Ford every stream



Follow every rainbow



Till...'

photos: Lesley Fraser

But -What a difference the weather makes!

This June a family holiday in the Lake District coincided with a week of fine weather, staying in Portinscale, just up the road from the HF Hotel where a group from OFS stayed last September. The contrasts were stark – no hail, rain or gale force winds but mountains clothed in sunshine, lakes sparkling and lush growth on the lakeshores. We didn't climb Cats Bells, once was enough, instead we walked round Buttermere and Derwentwater, stretches of Crummock and Ullswater and saw osprey chicks nesting near Bassenthwaite and red squirrels and lots of Herdwick sheep. We also located the farm where we stayed ten years ago when it did rain every day, we were so lucky as the following week was very wet, I am told!

Elizabeth Adams

STOP PRESS

OFS HAS 15 PLACES, "ON HOLD" WITH HF HOLIDAYS, at Newfield Hall (Malhamdale) near Skipton, Monday, May 14th – Friday, May 18th, 2018. This is a 4-night stay with 3 full days of guided walking. The basic cost is 396.50pp; there is an option to upgrade your room (#10.00pp per night), to buy insurance (£15.00) or to take a place as a non-member of HF (£10.00pp) BUT we must give a deposit of £75.00pp by SEPTEMBER 13TH.

These prices only apply if we have a minimum of 15 participants.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN GOING PLEASE CONTACT ME **URGENTLY:**

lesleyfraser@icloud.com (preferred method)

or

07884 057 182

01367 718 791

WHITBY, MAY 2017: HF HOUSE-LARPOOL HALL

As we drove into Whitby I noticed a side turning to a village called Littlebeck, the road signs having warnings of gradients 1 in 3 and 1 in 5 for more than 2 miles, which made me realise that walking in North Yorkshire wasn't for the faint hearted! However, it was not quite as bad as that all week; but there were some very steep sections both along the coast and on the Moors.

The first day began with grey skies and a biting easterly wind, starting out at the Pinchinthorpe Visitor Centre close to Guisborough, walking to and ascending Roseberry Topping (described as Yorkshire's mini-Matterhorn) with good views in all directions. We descended to the valley below and then, after lunch, another long climb up to Captain Cook's monument with a final, gradual descent to Great Ayton, the village where James Cook went to school before moving to Whitby - to be apprenticed.

By the second day the wind had dropped, slightly, and all three groups walked along the coastal path, The Cleveland Way, starting at three points depending on stamina: Cloughton, Hayburn Wyke and Ravenscar, walking northwards to Robin Hood's Bay. There were significant ups and downs with steep steps leading into and out of gullies formed by erosion of streams flowing into the sea. The last named Bogle Hole (a bogle is a ghost, but we didn't meet any) was particularly steep but fortunately the last one before dropping into Robin Hood's Bay where there was time for a

refreshing cup of tea before the coach took us back to the hotel.

On our last day all walks started at the Hole of Horcum, a huge bowl caused by spring-sapping where ground water welling up undermines the hillside slopes above, though legend has it that the god Wade picked up a clod of earth to throw at his wife during an argument.

Regardless of its formation, at three quarters of a mile across and four hundred feet deep it is large. Some of us circumnavigated the top, others walked down into and across it reaching a most lovely valley with sheep and lambs, and then up onto moorland where we passed a pond, created by monks for their flocks in the 12th century, before reaching the picturesque village of Levisham. Leaving the village we dropped down into a valley, walking by a stream with wild garlic in great profusion, passing a ruined, deconsecrated

church surrounded by green fields and more sheep, and on to cross the Whitby to Pickering train line. Our route should have taken us round Ness Head through forestry land, but, with no signs to indicate the path should be closed as felling was taking place, we got as far as fallen trees and had to retrace our steps. Quick thinking by our leader suggested the safe alternative – a lengthy climb to the top to re-join the footpath at a safe distance away from the logging. At the top we stopped for lunch, sitting in bright warm sunshine. Although this diversion added a mile or so to the route, we made up the time as we walked across level fields of winter wheat.

The final descent brought us into Pickering, walking parallel to the railway line; we saw great clouds of steam and smoke as the train chugged past us bringing back childhood memories and the smell of steam trains. There was time to look in Pickering parish church at the magnificent medieval frescoes which adorn the walls of the nave before returning to Larpool Hall.

JENNY BYRNE'S WHITBY PHOTO DIARY

Monday.

Wicked north wind, 'Lazy wind'- cuts through not round you.

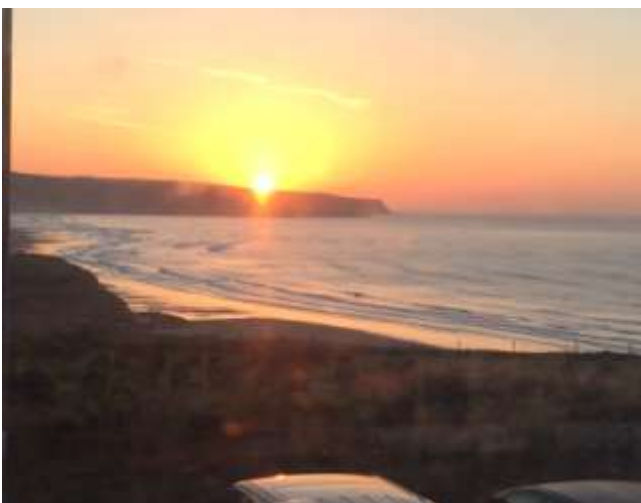
4pm tea followed by short walk to bottom of grounds, along cinder track which used to be old railway line to bridge over River Esk. Saw steam train below.

Dinner followed by interesting talk on the history of Whitby (Cook, Dracula and all that).

Tuesday.

Cool and dry, good walking weather. Sun for latter part of day. Did medium walk. Beautiful views.

After dinner an open-top bus tour of Whitby. We were treated to a magnificent (stunning) sunset to the west:



In all another great holiday. The teams at each HF house we have been to have been great in providing us with very comfortable accommodation, good food, and excellent walk leaders and an opportunity to walk in a different and sometimes challenging countryside. Above all a huge 'Thank you' to Alison Broadbridge for organising this and other recent holidays.

Elizabeth Adams



ROSEBERRY TOPPING



COOK'S MONUMENT



and the full moon over the Abbey ruins to the East.

Saw signs of land slippage which had demolished several houses. East Pier is also suffering from erosion and in need of replacement without which the harbour will not be protected.

Wednesday.

Wall to wall sunshine. Coastal Path along the Cleveland Way from Hayburn Wyke. Abundance of wild flowers through woodland. Some fairly steep flights of steps, quite tough walking. Picnicked at the disused alum processing plant. Finished at Robin Hood Bay. After the evening quiz took very weary limbs off to bed.

Thursday.

I elected for the easier walk round Horcum Bowl, a very large hollow formed when the local giant scooped up soil to throw at his wife during an argument (or, water erosion, if you prefer). Had coffee break at disused hunting lodge and watched steam trains in valley below:



Had picnic lunch at village pub where they served delicious home made lemonade. Dropped down to catch steam train to Pickering.

Visited church with wonderful wall paintings, Mott and Bailey Castle then a quick wiz round a wonderful folk museum (Beck Isle Museum?) – feeling old as full of articles I remember being used. The evening entertainment was a quiz on ‘body parts’. This proved to be hilarious as democracy was in full swing when it came to marking the answers to such questions as naming a body

part associated with a dance. Answers put forward were lap-dancing, belly-dancing, black bottom and hip-hop. The later was disallowed, as that is a form of music. I won't say what the answers were for ‘boy's name’!

Friday.

Weather deteriorated- perfect timing for our return journey to Oxford.

FOOTPATHS

Diversions, etc.

We are expecting the diversion order for the Oxfordshire Golf Course to be made soon; this should sort out the mess left when the golf course was built. The diversions round Lobb Farm have been confirmed, so that the paths actually connect and no longer pass through buildings. The bridleway claim on Pilgrims' Way at Blewbury has been confirmed. The County Council is considering 32 claims to upgrade restricted byways to byways open to all traffic (which would allow use by motor vehicles); all were made after the deadline imposed by the 2005 Act. A new proposal has been made for the path at the back of Signal Court at Eynsham; this would route the path through the flood plain of the Chill Brook, and I have insisted on mitigation measures.

The latest plans for the East-West Railway are out; these propose a cycle bridge at Jarvis Lane and rerouting of the Launton paths to a common footbridge nearest to Launton with a connecting path to the Marsh Gibbon paths. The dead ends would be closed, and it is also proposed to close the cross-field section of FP20; this would result in walkers having to follow the two sides of the field edge.

Other Matters

The regulations for the new Definitive Map legislation are not now expected until after April 2018 (I am not holding my breath). I

have a number of potential claims, plus a few cases where the Definitive Map is patently wrong and I still have the 1987-9 M40 side roads orders to prove it.

The second consultation for the Oxford flood alleviation scheme has ended. I have asked for the proposed bridleway to be put back into the scheme.

The summer growing season is upon us again and I have had to deal with the usual hazards. Having cleared the growth from the stiles on the recce, I found myself having to do further clearance on the walk two or three weeks later – it gives a new meaning to the term “growth industry”.

David Godfrey

Walks start points are sometimes easier to find with a satnav. If you are leading a walk please, WHERE IT IS FEASIBLE TO DO SO, give a postcode. You can find this at <http://gridreferencefinder.com> Find your location on the map; on left hand side is a box where you can fill in any detail that you know (eg Church Green, Stanford in the Vale); click “go” and on the map a drawing pin will appear. **Right click** on this and, magically, you will get post code, map ref and even latitude and longitude. And all sorts of other information...

Lesley Fraser

A thank you to everyone who contributed to the AGM RAFFLE in aid of the AIR AMBULANCE. We received a letter of thanks for the ofs donation of #100.00. If any one would like to continue supporting this wonderful organisation visit www.tvairambulance.org.uk/ where there are details of a weekly lottery and volunteer opportunities.

Margaret Jones

Please let Gwybeth Tyson have your email address: it makes communication so much easier - and saves postage costs: gwynethtyson@btinternet.com

OFS MEMBERS TAKE PART IN OXCLEAN 2017

Many of us will have come across litter on our walks, particularly in Oxford city but elsewhere too. This inspired some of us to take part in Oxclean this year. Oxclean is an annual event taking place in early March, in which several hundred people across Oxford city volunteer to collect litter in groups, from places where this is much needed. We formed a mixed group of walkers from Oxford Ramblers and Oxford Path Wardens, some of whom also belong to Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

There was no shortage of areas in need of a clean-up, but we decided to tackle a litter strewn verge on one side of the Eastern Bypass, south of Headington Quarry, on the afternoon of Friday 3rd March. The whole stretch is over a mile long and was bound to be a challenge - much litter seems to be thrown out from passing traffic. A footpath and cycle lane run along it, and there is a layby for parking. We hoped we could make the verge much cleaner and more pleasant for everyone who uses it.

After a short briefing in Homebase car park, ten of us armed ourselves with litterpickers, hi-viz vests and sacks and spread ourselves out along the bypass. Most of us worked in pairs, one collecting litter for recycling, and another collecting materials which could not be recycled. Some intriguing things turned up – a lantern and various other pieces of electrical equipment, as well as a large tyre. We worked hard for nearly two hours, filling 20 sacks in all, 11 of recyclable and 9 of non-recyclable litter. At the end, some of us had to be persuaded to stop, but eventually everyone was rounded up! We all dragged our sacks to a collection point near the layby, for the City Council to collect later as arranged.

Back in the car park, we gathered for well-earned cups of tea, cake and flapjacks, provided by Elaine Steane and Siobhan. Everyone seemed to find the afternoon rewarding, and the effects were clear to see.

Congratulations to Elaine Steane, Liz Adams, David Godfrey, Keith Frayn, David Adams, Catherine Eddy, Wendy Thomas, Penny Ward, and Geoffrey Woodley on all their hard work. Also thanks to Peter Ewart and Robin Harrison who made surprise appearances (Peter on his bike) to encourage us while we were working, in spite of other commitments.

Oxclean is organised by Oxford Civic Society, in partnership with Oxford City Council, The Oxford Times and many local community groups and schools. See www.oxclean.org.uk If anyone would like to join our group of walkers another time, or knows of a grot-spot in need of attention, please get in touch with Siobhan. More litterpickings may be arranged later in the year.

Siobhan Stead-Ellis

THE OXFORDSHIRE WAY – SURVEY AND IMPROVEMENTS

The Oxfordshire Way is a sixty-five mile recreational walk which runs south-east from Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire to Henley-on-Thames. The Way is one of the important recreational routes promoted by the Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team. In 1996 the Council published a guide, updated in 2004, and also produced a website-based version on the Internet from which it is possible to download maps and directions for particular sections of the Way. However, with the cutbacks in the level of funding it has not been possible for the Countryside Access Team to undertake the regular surveys and checks on the quality of the route as it would like.

At a meeting of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group it was suggested that over the Winter and Spring of 2016/2017 the Oxfordshire Area Rambler Groups and the Oxford Fieldpaths Society should undertake a complete survey of the Oxfordshire Way. This survey would involve checking the provision and the cleaning of finger-post signs and waymark discs; undertaking

clearance of any vegetation encroaching onto The Way; and reporting bridges and stiles in poor condition to the appropriate Field Officer. The Oxfordshire Way passes through an area of the County where the path quality is monitored by the Cotswold Wardens, the West Oxfordshire, Bicester and Kidlington, Thames and Wheatley Rambler groups and the Chiltern Society. It was agreed that the Oxford Fieldpaths Society would make a detailed survey and check the section from Shipton-under-Wychwood to Bourton-on-the-Water.

In June, therefore, in cool and overcast weather conditions a group from the OFS, - Liz Adams, Michael Payton, John Eyre and Jim Parke - walked the first stage of the section, from Shipton-under-Wychwood to the village of Bledington, just across the County boundary in Gloucestershire.



Jim Parke cleaning a Gloucester finger post sign

The group found that The Way was well signposted and way-marked and the path surface in good condition. Two waymark posts needed replacing as one had rotted off at the base and the other was tied onto another post which was in a rotten condition. Just north of Bruern Abbey, to their pleasant surprise, the group met a volunteer team from the Cotswold Wardens, hard at work strimming down the long grass on the path surface. The group then spent some time clearing away the encroaching vegetation on a stretch of woodland along Cocks Moor Copse to No Man's land. For the rest of the Way to the village of Bledington it was evident that the farmer had mown the path surface.



Bill Rooker, Liz Adams and Michael Payton hard at work

A few days later the second stage of The Oxfordshire Way was undertaken - in glorious sunshine - by the same group, with Bill Rooker replacing John Eyre. This time the survey was undertaken in the opposite direction, walking from Bourton-on-the-Water via Wyck Rissington to Bledington. The group found The Way was well marked with finger posts and waymark discs in Gloucestershire. There was a great deal of snipping and clipping away of the vegetation along The Way, especially at bridges. The photo shows the team hard at work on a bridge carrying The Way over a tributary of the River Windrush just to the east of Bourton. The only items of report were a missing fingerpost and a direction sign near Gawcombe. The path surface on the long section across fields from Gawcombe, following the Westcote Brook, to Bledington had been mown.

In addition to undertaking this survey the OFS has undertaken a programme of significant improvement to The Oxfordshire Way through its donate-a-gate policy of replacing stiles by gates. The first of these took place some years ago when three gates were installed on the Way, near Tetsworth. More recently, the Society has paid for two gates to be installed in the parish of Waterstock.



Michael Tyce and John Eyre at Waterperry

The photo shows John Eyre and Michael Tyce, the Chairman of Waterperry Parish, affixing the donation plaque on one of the gates. This installation at Waterstock will be followed in the autumn by the provision of four further gates in this parish, two funded by the Society and the other two by the Parish. Staff from the Countryside Access Team will install these gates. Further to the south, at Middle Assendon, the Society has agreed to provide a gate which is to be installed by the Chiltern Society.cs In this way the Society is making a significant contribution to improving the accessibility of this important recreational route.

Words & photos: Jim Parke

HELP!

MEMBERS – YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU HELP TO RECRUIT MORE MEMBERS. BRING A FRIEND TO A WALK TO INTRODUCE THEM TO OFS.

WALKS LEADERS – YOU’RE NEEDED SO PLEASE VOUNTEER; EXISTING LEADERS WILL HELP YOU.

J
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