



# OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 26: September 2020

### From the Chairman

#### Delayed AGM

The numbers 2020 have a pleasing symmetry but the year has been very different, the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic has changed OFS's year dramatically. By mid-March it was evident that the Walks programme and the AGM would need to be cancelled. Currently it is not possible to hold the AGM, and to fulfil the rules of the Constitution, with this mailing, apart from the Newsletter and winter programme you will find the minutes of the previous (2019) AGM and a voting slip. I am urging you to complete the voting slip and return to David Godfrey either by post or email. You are being asked to approve: firstly, the Minutes of the 2019 AGM; secondly, Annual Report and Accounts, both of which were distributed to all members in the March mailing; and thirdly to the appointment of the committee members *en bloc* for the year 2020. We are allowing voting to be open until 30<sup>th</sup> September after which we will be able to submit to the Charities Commission the names and details of the Committee who are the Trustees of OFS which we are obliged to do so under the Charities Laws.



#### THANKYOU LESLEY

Had the AGM taken place, as Chairman, I would have been thanking Lesley Fraser for her contributions to OFS and the Newsletter. Lesley has decided due to other commitments, to resign from the Committee. Lesley's editorial talents were obvious for all to see and read in the four issues she produced. Her organisational skills were much appreciated by those of us who went on the holidays with the HF Company. Lesley was able to negotiate special deals at some wonderful houses and ensure all our needs were met so that we enjoyed fantastic walking which usually coincided with glorious weather, that definitely is a talent.

## Other News

On the walking front January and February were very wet with muddy paths and some, under water. I regularly walk from Marson to Summertown and the Old Marston FP 10 alongside the river Cherwell was under water for more than a month and even when the water receded the trodden down path was away from the river as the photos show.



I think everyone has noticed that during lockdown paths were busier than usual with more people finding enjoyment of the most beautiful spring unfolding. My regular beat has been to use Headington Hill and South Park as well as the University Parks as they are on my doorstep, particularly important in that early phase of lockdown when we were asked to be out only for an hour. Needless to say the brambles have thrived in the warm weather and I regularly trim back, though I did contact OCC about Cuckoo Lane which the City team tackled and now I can just about keep the rogue brambles under control, though blackberries are disappointingly small! Most recently walking along Mesopotamia, the Kings Mill stream has been covered with duck weed which has become a feasting place for a family of swans and now I make an almost daily pilgrimage to see them thriving, making channels through the green.

As the summer drifts on I do hope that we will be able to meet with more people on walks to enjoy the local countryside, but am very aware of the need to make sure that walking is safe for all. It is understandable that those members who have been shielding or are more vulnerable may feel they are unable to join the programme currently but trust they are all remaining well in these difficult times and look forward to better ones in the future.



## Summer Walks Programme

We live in unprecedented times! The 2020 OFS Summer walks programme has had to be cancelled because of the Government imposed lockdown in mid-March due to the Coronavirus pandemic. At the time of writing this report there has been a slight relaxation of the lockdown allowing individual persons to walk the Public Rights of Way accompanied by 5 persons, while maintaining a social distance of 2 metres apart. However it is not legally possible for groups larger than this to go on organised walks. It is not known when these restrictions will change. Walk Leaders have been asked if they would be willing to lead walks for the remainder of the Summer programme on this basis.

It was especially galling because the weather conditions in late April and May were some of the best ever experienced. In fact May 2020 was the sunniest and warmest May since records began. This weather was in stark contrast to the very wet conditions in January and February which caused some walks to have to be rerouted because paths were under water!

Jim Parke  
Walks Organiser

### FIRST WALK AFTER LOCKDOWN

Cuxham. July 8<sup>th</sup>. 2020

#### Restriction:

*During the constraints, sadly not being able to lead my walk on 1<sup>st</sup>.April, I went for a walk across the fields from Yarnton, aiming to get to Duke's Lock. There wasn't anyone else about. On the way I heard the Woodpecker, & on Duke's Lock lake I saw 2 Wrens, some Great Tits & heard a Coot. They have now cleared the Footpath round 2 sides of the Lake. It is looking much better. I sat for a while in the sun on the bench at the Canal on a wide bit of grass away from the path. Two Kites & one Buzzard were circling above. Also a Police Helicopter! It is not good to walk the Canal paths as there are people running & walking too close by. On the way home I saw many Crows nesting & Jackdaws & Magpies. It was a good walk all in all 4 miles.*

*Janice Ure*



The rain did not dampen our spirits



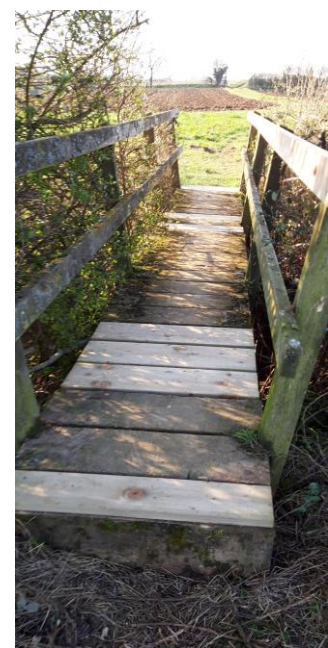
Walking through fields of opium poppies.

## Footpath Matters by David Godfrey. Diversions, etc.

The approach to lockdown was accompanied by a rush of confirmations of modification orders; as a result, the list is down to 69 outstanding cases. Of these one has been refused, five are awaiting an order, two have orders awaiting advertisement, seven have objections outstanding, one is awaiting confirmation, and three are awaiting determination. Fifteen are being investigated; and ten have been assigned an officer, leaving 25 yet to be started. There are 19 outstanding diversion cases. Of these one has been confirmed but not yet advertised; three have had orders made, and a further eight have been consulted on. The only new case of any kind since lockdown is the proposed diversion of Marcham FP5 for mineral extraction. Two of the outstanding orders are for Great Tew FP6 at and beyond Soho Farms.

The Warren Crescent plans at Lye Valley have been amended to include a path on the valley side; it appears that this will only be permissive.

**For Amusement,** I attach a photo of a waymark on the bridge on the Elsfield-Woodeaton parish boundary on the Green Belt Way. The OCC waymark points across the bridge and the OGBW one points in the direction the path takes after crossing. If I were you I wouldn't start from here...



I also attach photos of the bridge on Gosford FP7 on March 25 and 27 – I reported this on the 26<sup>th</sup> and it had already been repaired by about 4.15pm the following day.

## Other Matters

The so-called consultations on the Oxford Expressway are, still shrouded in fog.

The Flood Alleviation Scheme has had to be amended to include rebuilding Kennington Railway Bridge. This will involve new planning applications and revised purchase orders to accommodate this.

During lockdown I have been walking from home. Paths that were previously almost empty are now being used by almost everybody and their dog, as well as a plague of bicycles which are definitely not sticking to the bridleways or even to the footpaths. I have been clearing everything in sight (three times so far on Elsfield FP12 beyond JC Manor), assisted on one occasion by a family of locals who turned up on Gosford FP4 armed with three pairs of secateurs and a pair of garden shears; I let them pass (when there was space to do so) and tidied up after them.

## Group Walking Visit to the HF House, Peveril of the Peak, Derbyshire

From Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> October to Friday 1<sup>st</sup> November, a group of OFS members spent a wonderful week of guided walking, socialising and eating at the HF House, Peveril of the Peak, Thorpe, Derbyshire. The House is old and quirky with lots of corridors, set in beautiful countryside a short distance from the entrance to Dove Dale Gorge and the famous steppingstones. The building has seen better days and furniture and fittings could benefit from some refurbishment, but this all paled into insignificance compared with the generosity, service and friendliness of the staff and management team. The food was the best I have ever experienced in an HF house, and I have been to many such houses. On Tuesday night we had a 5-course menu using local produce, and the source of the ingredients was fully explained by our host.



Autumn colours, hills and sunshine



Again, we were very fortunate in having three very experienced and knowledgeable walks leaders, two men and one lady, who organised a varied walking programme in the challenging hilly Dales countryside.

The third huge positive about this walking holiday was the weather. In late October we might have expected heavy rain and unpleasant conditions but we obviously chose four days when the sun shone at times and the rain was kept at bay.

There were other walking groups and activity course members staying at the same time and a very friendly bonding was formed so the bar, social activities and mealtimes provided lots of conversation and communal exchanges.

Three full day walks are on offer every day providing different walking experiences, but even the shorter walks were up hill and down dale, with much higher gradients than we are used to in Oxfordshire. I chose two easy walks and one medium walk; two were 6.5 miles in length and the other was 9.5 miles. On Tuesday we were all taken by coach to areas near Buxton and dropped off at different points. The easy group had a route which followed paths circling the hills above the town and then coming down via Grin Low and Buxton Country Park, stopping for a break at Solomon's Temple viewing tower. All groups met up in the town afterwards with time to view the spa facilities but many buildings were in a state of disrepair. On Wednesday all groups were transported to the area around Crich, an area at the heart of the industrial revolution. I chose the middle group option where we climbed over 1000 feet, through lovely autumnal countryside to end our day walking along the old Crompton canal. There was time to have a tea and cake in the café and look at the site of Crompton Mills, a world heritage site. This is where Richard Arkwright built the first factory to house the new water powered cotton spinning frames (the Spinning Jenny). On Thursday we all set off from the House in different directions. My easy group followed the footpath from the back of the property over the fields past the hill Thorpe Cloud down to the river Dove and the Steppingstones. The river was in flood, and we were unable to cross so followed the river path for some miles to Mill Dale. It was a beautiful trail along the swollen river and we saw several dippers bobbing through the

water. At Mill Dale we had a long lunch break before ascending a challenging climb and back over fields to the house. We had climbed over 1200 feet that day.



Steppingstones over the swollen River Dove  
We had Dove Dale to ourselves.



This was my favourite HF holiday and I felt a huge thank you was due to Lesley Fraser for having organised it. Sadly, HF Holidays are moving more into activity holidays and away from guided walking, so what they offer may not be the ideal situation for future OFS group holidays. We shall see what a post covid19 world holds for group holidays.

Sue Crisp

## SAVE THE OXFORDSHIRE GREEN BELT

Over three hundred people including members of OFS, The Ramblers, conservationists, golfers, and residents of the surrounding villages met in Waterstock on July 1<sup>st</sup>. The aim was to bring to the attention of the general public, a proposal to build warehousing and a lorry hub on 200 acres of the Waterstock Golf Course which sits on part of the Oxfordshire Green Belt.

The protesters walked on part of the Oxfordshire Way which crosses the golf course where OFS have donated gates. If the development is allowed it would mean the Oxfordshire Way would go through the industrial site.

Any type of development would have a devastating impact on the local environment which is the habitat of rare wildlife including curlew and otters. Sixty-one species seen on this site are on the UK protected species list. Also 15,000 mature trees would have to be felled.

Julia Dobson



Brian and Julia Dobson at an OFS gate

**REMEMBER TO SEND IN YOUR VOTING SLIPS**



From the walk on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2019 Northleigh led by Janice Ure  
Walkers: Janice, Sue, Steve, Patricia, Maggie and Eileen.

**Oats and Peas and Barley grow  
These OFS walkers do know  
Cos on the North Leigh walk they did go  
Across the fields of Barley O.**

**Eileen Mace**

### **Michael's Bountiful Booty**

Michael's boot is open for business.  
There are veggies galore all varied and seasonal  
Fresh, straight from the ground  
and the price is so reasonable!

There are bulbs for the Spring, carrots, and beets  
Butternut squash, parsnips, and leeks.  
Apples for pies and rhubarb for gin (hic)  
There are even bags to put them all in.  
Shallots and onions, potatoes too  
So many veg, this is just a few.

And, Oh! What a bonus there's no mud to be seen  
All the root vegetables are scrubbed quite clean.  
The brussels are trimmed and the carrots look  
polished  
Michael's bountiful booty is quickly demolished!

We have enjoyed the fruits of his labour  
eating those vegetables so full of flavour.  
So, Michael thank you for your tasty roots  
From all of us wearing walking boots.



### **The Annual outing to Chichester**

**"To be or not to be"** that is the question for which, at the time of writing this we have no certain answer. As the situation is more changeable than the current weather the final decision will be made nearer the date, which is Saturday, September 5<sup>th</sup>.

I will be positive and say, **"read all about it in the next edition."**

Jenny Byrne

## Lewis Spiess

It is with sadness we report the passing of Lewis Spiess earlier this year. Lewis joined OFS in 2000 and was elected Chairman in 2005 until 2008, he was an effective Chairman, leading the meetings with a surety that seemed effortless. He was an energetic walks leader with the Chilterns as his home base, the walks invariably started with a stiff climb, with most of us seeing the bottom of his rucksack as he led the way, however the views when we reached the summit were worth the effort! Lewis also introduced members to night walking using careful planning to coincide with the full moon, walking, once our eyes got used to the dark, without torches. In 2010 Lewis moved to Wales, near Talley to a house surrounded by fields where he was extremely happy and joined a local walking group.

## What3words - This free app could be very useful in an emergency

How do I use what3words in an emergency?

1. Find the 3 word address for your current location on the free what3words app for [iOS](#) and [Android](#). It works offline – ideal for areas with unreliable data connection.
2. Share your 3 word address over the phone to the call handler.
3. The emergency service can then coordinate a response directly to the exact location where help is needed.

## SPREAD THE WORD. Can you display a poster somewhere? Available from Jenny Byrne or Jim Parke



Or send a card with the OFS info. on the back.

The cards are of paintings by Jenny inspired by views from our walks and are £1 each.

**REMEMBER TO SEND IN YOUR VOTING SLIPS**



