



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 27: September 2021

From the Chairman, Liz Adams

Since the last Newsletter the country has oscillated between lockdown and freedom, we became used to the restrictions of being out on the footpaths either singly or in 'bubbles', and finally with fellow members of OFS as the walks programme restarted. It has undoubtedly been a very trying period for everybody; missing contact with family and friends, and yet for those able to get out and use the footpaths it was encouraging to see some well used paths almost busy as the public discovered what is literally on their doorstep. For those who have had to shield the year has been more difficult and I hope that now with the success of the vaccination programme and the availability of testing, members are feeling more confident being out, mixing with others again.

Earlier this year Sir Hugo Brunner our President indicated to me that he wished to retire from a post he initially said he would hold for three years. We have been fortunate that either he forgot or was not reminded as he has chaired the AGMs with efficiency as well as joining us on walks when able. His advice in searching for his successor was invaluable and Lady Sylvia Jay has accepted the role of President-elect and will be elected at the AGM in April next year.

As there has been no AGM for two years the Committee felt that there should be an opportunity for the members to meet together to thank Sir Hugo and to welcome Lady Jay, so all members are invited to the 'Summer Gathering' at Tiddington Village Hall on Saturday 25th September. There will be a short walk followed by afternoon tea, a similar format to the AGM but without formal business and a chance to catch up with friends. The details are on the flyer which is in this mailing and to make catering easier please do RSVP to me.

The Society continues to be approached to help fund the replacement of stiles with gates. Those who live in Oxford will be pleased to hear the notorious Old Marston FP3 which in parts has been a mud bath for many years has been greatly improved by the Countryside Services of OCC. Five new gates have been installed, a replacement bridge over a culvert, ditches cleared, and hard core put down to consolidate the surface. I am told that members of the public have thanked the Team apart from one person who complained why it was being done, as it would encourage more users! If you are aware of other broken stiles, please do contact the committee as we do have funds to support this work.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee who have put up with my temperamental broadband service as we have continued to hold the meetings on Zoom to ensure that the Society remains an active and visible.



FP3 Before and after, Liz Adams.

Summer Walks Programme. Jim Parke, Walks Organiser

This year the OFS walks programme has been subjected to periods of lockdown when organised walks were not possible. This restriction was eased at the beginning of April this year and a programme of summer walks has been allowed to go ahead, with members required to book a walk's place by telephoning the walks leader after 9.00 am two days before the walk was to take place. Although the theoretical maximum number of persons allowed on a walk was 30, walk leaders had authority to limit numbers coming taking into account the nature of the route, the number of stiles etc.

The weather continues to vary enormously. The early Spring 2021 was remarkably wet and chilly but from mid-May onwards and into June it is a pleasure to record that sunny and warm conditions have prevailed.

I am most grateful to those walks leaders who have agreed to lead walks in the programme, particularly in the light of the requirement to take bookings, noting details of those coming and finally completing the risk assessment form.

Footpath Matters by David Godfrey

Diversions, etc.

The list of modification orders is now 70 outstanding cases. Of these one is awaiting an order, one has an order made, eight have objections outstanding, and four have been confirmed.

Five cases are awaiting determination. Twenty-six are being investigated, leaving 25 yet to be started. There are 27 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. Recent cases are Merton Grounds Farm, where the owner wants to divert a straight and pleasant track onto a frankly horrible jungle for alleged reasons of security, Cropredy FP7 where the existing definitive path ends at the bottom of a 30ft pillar supporting the motorway bridge, and paths at Kingston Common where no two versions of the Definitive Map (Berkshire 1956 and 1977, and Oxfordshire 1999 and 2006) show the same line.

Site visits to the proposed diversion of Tetsworth FP65 revealed a complete mess in the area, including at least seven obstructions on the owner's land, including several completely blocked hedges and two stiles which are frankly dangerous; both have lost their steps and I could only cross the one at the road by sitting precariously on the top bar.

The Warren Crescent plans at Lye Valley have been amended to include a path on the valley side. The City Council decided in December to dedicate this, thus overcoming most of the objections. Nothing has been heard from Planning Inspectorate regarding confirmation of the original diversion order.

Other Matters

The Oxford Expressway has officially been cancelled, but there are signs that bits of it may arrive piecemeal. There have been rumours of a possible road to cut out the stretch through Botley.

The Flood Alleviation Scheme has had to be amended to include rebuilding the A423 Kennington Rail Bridge. This will involve new planning applications and revised purchase orders to accommodate this. The main changes are: (a) there will no longer be concrete culverts at the bridge, (b) there will be new ponds to compensate for the reduction in size of Kennington Pond.

And finally – praise be to Liz Adams and Sarah Aldous for sorting out the two awkward stiles and the sludgewallow squelchmire hippopotamus-bath on Marston FP3. I went in over the top of my boots on my third recce to try to find a dry route for Oxford Group Ramblers AGM in November 2019. Hooray! Hallelujah!!

Chichester Trip, A sunny day in September

The lead up to our planned annual trip was a roller-coaster ride but in the end all was well. We were fortunate that the trip coincided with the brief relaxation of Covid restrictions between Lockdown 1 and Lockdown 2 and even the closure of the M3 for bridge works worked to our advantage as the cross country route from Winchester was much more interesting and didn't take any longer. There were 18 of us, not quite the number needed to cover our costs. Baker's Coaches, who themselves were having a tough time with lockdown, were brilliant and not only reduced their hire charge but gave us their largest coach so we could socially distance on the journey. The short fall of £75 was met from the social fund. I would like to thank my co-organizer Marsaleete, I think between us we managed to produce a really good annual trip complete with wall to wall sunshine.



Jenny Byrne

Jenny's wait and see patience paid off and the day out to Chichester became a reality. Although we sat social distancing in the coach it felt like we were a group of walking friends once again.

We were blessed with clear still autumn sunshine lighting up the beautiful scenery of yachts sailing on the water and trees right up to the edge of the estuary. Lapses of social distancing now and again went unnoticed.

Just the right length of walk to leave us enough energy after our picnic in the Bishop's Palace garden to enjoy exploring Chichester. The cathedral, the Pallant Gallery, the gardens and the elegant town houses were all to be admired.

Such a nice day out - a rare thing in this summer of 2020

Ann Partridge



Past trips have always been enjoyable and an important date in our social calendar. If you have any suggestions for a future daytrip please let me know.
Jenny Byrne

I didn't expect such a quick reply to my appeal but you will read later that Lesley has made a suggestion; Definitely a day outing for next year.



Eme and Jenny came across this happy band of enthusiastic walkers on the Oxfordshire Way, future OFS members perhaps?

A Simple Slip! by Jenny Byrne



Photo taken by Liz Adams

Hurray! – We were walking again.

The forecast was abysmal for October 24th but we turned out ‘en masse’ for Michael’s walk from Farmoor Reservoir.

We had not long set off in two socially distanced groups, when I had my ‘little accident’. The footpath was a deep, muddy gully going uphill towards Cumnor. Not wishing to get my boots too muddy I chose to use the grassy tussocks on the bank which resulted in a gentle slip and its unfortunate consequences.

The ambulance crew arrived, guided to our location by the What3Words app., and once they got me high on laughing gas and administered a good slug of intravenous Paracetamol, I was stretchered to the ambulance by four very fit young men. I felt like the Queen of Sheba. It was a treacherous journey uphill on very slippery mud but they got me safely stowed in the ambulance before the heavens opened.

X-rays showed I had a trimalleolar fracture with talar impaction injury, in other words a broken ankle. Because of possible complications I spent eight weeks in plaster. Non-weight bearing for this length of time was quite a challenge giving credence to the saying “Necessity is the mother of invention”.

Eight months on as I write this account in the glorious June sunshine, I am making good but slow progress, it has been a long haul but I am getting there and am looking forward to being able to join the walks once more. My consolation is with lockdown and awful weather I have not missed a lot.

What have I learnt from this experience?

Firstly, in an emergency the NHS came up trumps (no political pun intended), the service and care throughout has been excellent.

The [what3words app](#) proved extremely useful guiding the emergency services to our location. Expect the unexpected, no matter how prepared you are things can go wrong in a second. I had the boots, the pole and the phone with the all-important app but my glasses, which I need to see the screen, were in a pocket under my body and not accessible.

My situation could have been less happy if I had not been in the company of fellow OFS walkers. ACCIDENTS CAN HAPPEN – NEVER WALK ALONE IN ISOLATED PLACES.

what3words - This free app could be very useful in an emergency

FOOTNOTE. Jim and the Vale Path Volunteers Path Maintenance team of the Vale of White Horse Rambler Group (That's a mouthful) cut a swathe through the undergrowth and increased the width of the path considerably. THANKYOU.



[Day Walks - Bourton on the Water. by Lesley Fraser](#)

I could easily have overlooked this; HF sent just one email advertising these and as checking my emails is a bore I leave till it's raining, or there's nothing on the telly, or I'm overcome with guilt that I might have missed something fairly urgent...

There was a charge (£17.50) though I'm not quite sure what it was for because the post-walks cup of tea and cake were at a price and the leader was a volunteer. However, 14 of us had booked in on each of the two walks, oh-so-happy to be finally beyond our local area, to be in the company of like-minded walkers and to enjoy the May sunshine and breeze. And I was delighted to walk from Bourton as it is too close for me to ever book in as a holiday destination.

The full flood of tourists had not yet descended so we saw Bourton at its best; and beyond was fantastic. Both leaders were well versed in the history of the area, the flora and fauna, and best places to pause and look. Along the Windrush Way to start, then on the Gloucester Way to Cold Aston, and the across to Join the Monarch's Way** and a climb to Clapton on the Hill, a lovely village, unspoiled.

The second walk took a route up to both Lower and Upper Slaughter, across to another part of the Monarch's Way, thence to the Diamond Way (part of the Oxfordshire Way) and gently back in time to admire the centre of the town.

Now I have two extra walks to enjoy in a previously unexplored area. Bourton is not too far in travelling time from Oxford, so maybe it could be a possible day-outing for us all?

****The Monarch's Way** is a 625-mile long-distance footpath in England that approximates the escape route taken by King Charles II in 1651 after being defeated in the Battle of Worcester ^[2] It runs from Worcester via Bristol and Yeovil to Shoreham, West Sussex.

A LITTER PICKING AFTERNOON. by Emerita Pilgrim.

A small band of familiar faces of the Ramblers, Civic Society and OFS – 11 of us in all, joined together under the leadership of Keith Frayn, Oxford Ramblers Path Coordinator on Saturday 12th June to litter pick in Magdalen Wood West, in Wood Farm, opposite Shotover Park, all wearing Hi-Vis jackets. Magdalen Wood is an attractive woodland with an abundance of very tall oak trees, areas of waist high brambles and stunted thorn shrubs. The main footpaths were clearly used by residents on foot with prams and a few cyclists from Wood Farm and the Slade areas.

Keith Frayn had been round the wood a week earlier so at first it seemed we wouldn't gather very much, however the heaviest load proved to be found behind the residential areas. There were no signs of wheelie bins or large public collection bins behind these residential areas - a pity I thought.

At first it was very pleasant and cool under the tall trees. Siobhan and I found a non-working TV with all its cables and several other heavy bags, one of cement just left at the base of a tree partially hidden by thorny brambles. We couldn't move them so Siobhan took photographs so they could be reported for collection.

Behind residential houses proved to be "rewarding" as far as litter was concerned! Sadly I found discarded, at least 4 or 5 packs of 12 bundled "Cystic Fibrosis" Charity collection bags, unused and half buried. The discarded bottles and cans were strewn a-plenty but getting to them was a little taxing as we needed to bend double to proceed under the thorny undergrowth. Our large recycling and rubbish bags were soon filled and we needed to start with others; thank goodness for the long "helping hand" pickers that had been distributed by Keith. This "rewarding booty" proved to be hot work!

Keith had suggested we start at 2pm and finish at 3:30pm, he then invited us all to tea in the nearby "Franca's Café", in a way to thank the café owner for the use of his facilities. He did however warn us that it would be full of viewers of the live World Cup on a large TV screen.

It proved to be a worthwhile Oxford Community spirited occasion; we collected more than 20 bags of rubbish, an old iron bedstead, two TVs, a bucket of broken glass and various other heavy items. Keith had borrowed the equipment from the Oxford Civic Society and he contacted the Oxford Direct Services to take our collection away which they were very prompt in doing.



A Winter Walk by Marsaleete Anderson.

One of the (few) benefits of lockdown is that it has introduced more people to



the pleasures of walking. I was thrilled to receive an e-mail from a former work colleague who had turned to her local countryside for exercise and ‘something to do’, only to find that she was hooked. ‘I now understand why you enjoy walking so much!’ she wrote. However, the flip side is that popular walks can be overwhelmed with too many people, especially at the weekend. So, while sticking to my local walk through Headington Hill and South Parks during the week, on Saturday/Sunday I looked for something unlikely to attract swathes of walkers. With this in mind, Marion and I met up in Blewbury one very cold January morning to venture up onto the Downs. No one was about; that feeling

of solitude increased as we climbed steadily up through a soft, icy mist to the top. The distant views and the vales below were shrouded in a gentle fog, which eddied around us as we made our way along the top. Instead of far-reaching views, we were enchanted by the heavy hoar frost which coated each and every blade of grass, dried seed head, twig, and fence wire. What would normally be commonplace and dull was transformed into something beautiful and exquisitely detailed. One such detail is pictured here, although it can’t begin to convey the magic of the Downs that wintry day. I look back at the photos from time to time, and have made a mental note to do this walk again. But I know full well that I will struggle to find those same conditions, no matter how often I retrace the route. That is both the joy, and the heartache, of walking. You never know what moments of beauty await you, even on a course you have trodden many times, but you know they are fleeting and it will never be exactly the same again.

A Nature Walk by Elaine Steane

It was a beautiful early June day with sunshine from start to finish. We set off from the Village Hall car park in Great Barrington. Even at ten o'clock in the morning there were dozens of swifts arcing (a term to describe swifts flying close to buildings, often close to nest sites). We then followed the path of both the Seven Shires Way and the D'Arcy Dalton Way, northwards and uphill into the Great Barrington Estate.



Great Barrington Estate has been organically managed for over 25 years, resulting in a rich diversity of birds, flowers and butterflies which were a joy on this perfect summer's day.



All the fields have wide margins and a rotation of wild flowers. We passed the remains of phacelia, a tall pale purple flower reputed to be among the top ten

favoured nectar source for bees. Earlier in the year on a recce, we saw early spotted orchids bordering the footpaths. In June, it was the turn of the bright candy pink coloured Sainfoin, a member of the pea family. Its French name means healthy hay.



A Painted Lady butterfly was the first to be spied by one of our group. These intrepid butterflies migrate to Britain from Europe and Africa each year. They cover up to one hundred miles a day and often hitch a ride on the cross Channel ferries. Sometimes so many arrive that the season is known as a 'Painted Lady summer'. Our lonely individual looked rather tatty and pale! Further on we spotted the flighty Common Blue butterfly. Confusingly the female is chocolate brown.

While we enjoyed our packed lunch in Great Rissington, a swift flew to and fro from its nest site in the church porch. En route home we followed the intriguingly named Sabrina Way, a bridleway stretching from the Pennines to the Cotswolds. It's named after the Roman goddess of the River Severn.

We passed the Deer Leap, a stone wall which formerly allowed deer to leap into Great Barrington Parkland, but not to leap out again. The parkland of this gracious Palladian house is well stocked with handsome fallow deer.

As we parted Liz Adams remarked, "Well, that was a real nature walk!".

WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR 2021 REPORT

For a number of years the Oxford Fieldpaths Society has mounted a publicity stall at the annual Wychwood Forest Fair. There was no fair last year because of the Covid pandemic but this year the Fair was organised and sited at Foxburrow Community Wood located on the outskirts of Witney. The stall was manned by Liz Adams, Jenny Byrne, Margaret Jones and Jim Parke. The members set up the stall early in the morning in a large well-ventilated marquee with good social distancing spaces. At first the weather was unpromising with leaden skies. However, by mid-morning the clouds had rolled back and the rest of the day saw warm and welcome sunshine.

The display on the stall was set out to showcase the main activities of the Society, in particular the walks programme which aims at keeping the paths open and well used; we also showed photographs of several gates which the society has funded to replace stiles. Photographs of the d'Arcy Dalton survey showed that the Society continues to ensure that this important recreational route is well signed, the path infrastructure is in good condition and the vegetation is under control. It was encouraging to hear from local visitors and walkers that the d'Arcy Dalton Way is well-known to them. Copies of previous walks programmes were given out to visitors to show the variety and number of walks that the Society puts on. Copies of previous year's newsletters were also handed out.

During the day nearly a hundred visitors stopped at the stall, giving an opportunity for us to extol the work of the Society. A number of people said that they had taken up walking in their local areas during periods of Covid Lockdown. This provided a useful lead-in to explain that walking with the Society would introduce them to other parts of the County, with its varied attractive landscapes, without the danger of them getting lost. Hopefully our efforts will be rewarded with an influx of new members. We also explained to people how to go about reporting problems with footpath via the Countryside Services website.

We were delighted to see Hugo Brunner, our President, Michael Payton and Trish Berger who was resplendent in her Wychwood Morris dancing costume.

One lady visitor was so impressed with the work of the Society that she gave a donation of £15. She would not give us her name or contact details so we cannot thank her by letter. Nevertheless we are most grateful for her donation and she was profusely thanked.

Though there appeared to be no signage advertising the event it was well attended and in the closing hour it was announced that several of the food venues had sold out as had the beer tent – possibly Trish and her Morris dancing teams had a helping hand in drinking the barrels dry!



The Wychwood Team

Can you display a poster somewhere?
Available from Jenny Byrne or Jim Parke

OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY



O.F.S.

FRIENDLY WALKING GROUP.
COME & WALK WITH US ALONG
FOOTPATHS.
NO NEED TO BOOK. JUST TURN UP.

SEE WEBSITE FOR DETAILS OF
FORTHCOMING
WALKS.

www.ofs.org.uk

Newsletter 2022

My 'IN BOX' is open all year.
If you have an article for next
year's publication,
please email to
jenniferbyrne@talktalk.net

The Cuckoo comes in April,
She sings her song in May.
She changes her tune
In the month of June,
And July she flies away.