



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 29: September 2023

From the Chairman, Jenny Byrne.

I want to talk about **AGE**, there is no denying it affects us all.

Let's start at the beginning.

The OFS was founded by Colonel d'Arcy Dalton in 1926 hence is in its 97th year.

The records I have access to show that in 2000 we had 435 members. Walks were in the range of 13 miles and all-day events. So popular were they that concern was raised over the large number of members attending. Can you imagine the time taken for 40 people to climb over several stiles?

Today we have a membership of 197 but many are no longer able to join us on walks. That so many of you continue to pay your subs reflects on your long association with the club and the happy days of companionable walking with like-minded people. The annual newsletters and AGM are an important way for all to keep in touch with each other and with what is going on in the Society.

With **AGE** we are shying away from the 13-mile walks and reduced distances of 5-8 miles is becoming more popular. David Godfrey has addressed his need to stretch his legs by splitting his walks into two sections, morning and afternoon, a formula that works well. Someone who does not shy away from long distance walking is Rose Freeman who fascinated us at the AGM with her account of her solo walk from Lands End to John O'Groats or LEJOG as she called it.

For many of us without transport travelling to walks can present a problem. Please do not let this stop you coming. We try to use public transport where possible and actively promote car sharing. WhatsApp is proving an invaluable tool for this.

Walking is the main social activity of the OFS but let us not forget those for whom walking has become difficult. They have in the past contributed so much to the society and the social side can be a great loss to them. At the other end of the

spectrum, we need fresh blood. The next generation do walk but with mobile phones and modern technology they are more likely to 'do their own thing' rather than join a club. To try and close this divide and recruit younger walkers we are holding a bring and share picnic open to members, their families and friends. Other social activities are the annual coach trips and of course the AGM with interesting speakers and excellent teas.

In three years' time Oxford Fieldpaths Society will reach the grand age of 100

What celebrations can we organise to commemorate our centenary? Please forward any suggestions, it is not too early to start planning, time passes all too quickly as we know from the speed with which walks are requested for the programmes.

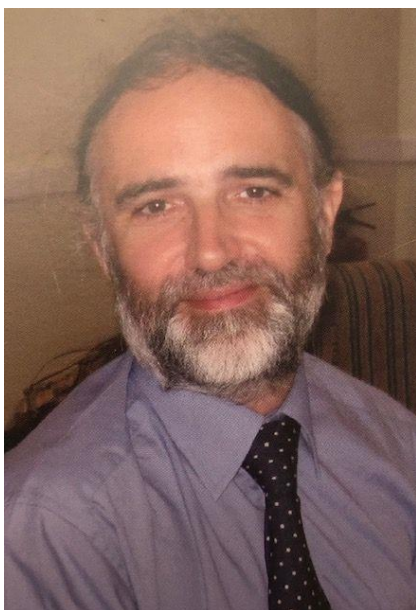
And remember the **AGE-OLD** saying "Use it or loose it". Keep walking and enjoy it.

Committee Ins and outs

We say goodbye to Janice Ure. Who has resigned after serving on the committee since 2013.

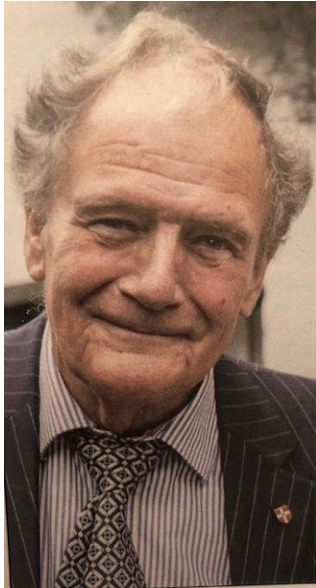
Stephen Warren, Kim Phips and Jess Radford have all stepped forward, their presence on the committee is most welcome.

It is with great sadness we have lost two of our members, both of whom played pivotal roles on the committee of OFS.



27th July 1971 – 1st Sept 2022

Adam Willet's death from cancer on Sept 1st came just too late to be included in our last newsletter. With him we lost not only the technical expertise to manage our website which he has done since 2010, but the benefit of his advice on every subject imaginable as well as an amiable walking companion. Though it may take some time to go through Probate Adam has very generously left OFS £10,000 In his will.



Jim Parke will be greatly missed by all walkers. He joined OFS in 2006. His contribution to footpaths has been enormous over many years. He was the instigator of the Parish Path Wardens' network in Oxfordshire and driving force behind D'Arcy Daltons Blue Plaque award. Jim was a keen walks' leader and took pride in keeping vegetation at bay and waymarks clean. He died on Christmas Day after a long battle with cancer.

He died of service, not of rust.

19th Dec 1940 – 25th Dec 2022

Peter Haskin, a life member, passed away this year. He and his wife Vaughan joined OFS in 1968. Vaughan served on the committee for many years. Though they no longer walked they have been regular attendees of the AGM.

Events this year

2023 kicked off with an unscheduled walk followed by a pub lunch in Northmoor. Though the weather could have been kinder it was just the tonic for a February day.

Those of us booked for a 3-day trip to Dymock finally got to see the wonderful daffodils and walk The Poets Way, a delay of 3 years due to Covid.





The AGM was held in Kennington Village Hall. Our President Lady Sylvia Jay introduced Rose Freeman who gave an excellent talk and slide show on her (mostly) solo walk from Lands End to John O'Groats, or LEJOG as she titled it. An entertaining account of the highs and lows of this 1200 mile hike which took her 4 months.

Picture of Rose still smiling after her feat.

By the time you are reading this we will have held a bring and share picnic preceded by a walk from Holton village hall. Members were invited to bring along family and friends to this social event as a way of introducing younger people to OFS.

The annual outing on September 9th to Savernake Forest and Marlborough will have taken place. Coach prices were horrendous but we managed to get a booking for a 22 seat minibus at a price that made the fare reasonable.

No residential holidays were arranged. If any member would like to organize one we have the network to support you. Or, if you have booked something and want company we could make our own arrangements to join you.

[OFS WhatsApp group.](#)

This is a very useful method of communication.

It is specifically for OFS matters where members can make contact about car-sharing, last minute changes to the walks programme and requests for walking buddies.

If you would like to join, please contact:

Marsaleete 07835863063;

Jenny 07460381826

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Overgrown footpaths and missing waymarks by Liz Adams

Out checking walks recently has made me appreciate the work of the Countryside Services and local parish path wardens in keeping the many miles of footpaths open and walkable. One example where this has not been the case has been walking from Buckland to Carswell Marsh. The footpath along Marriage Hill was a mass of nettles which I hacked my way through and came to the steep descent, which was decidedly dangerous, with nothing to hang on to apart from nettles. I slithered down and emerged through shrubby trees into a huge field of wheat with a wonderfully wide path cleared through. The farmer had cleared the paths through his other arable fields and fenced off the path where cattle were grazing. A brief conversation with him clarified the problems of Marriage Hill.

More recently on the Northampton/Oxfordshire border, walking on the Millenium Way though fields of waist high wheat no path had been reinstated, the path was barely visible, and, as there had been a shower we got very wet. A further problem on the walk was where the footpaths in the area meet the Oxford Canal there were no gates for access, we had to clamber over fences. The landowners don't seem to believe in gates! Once on the canal, the bank has eroded badly in multiple places and the overgrown hedges had to be cut back as we went to ensure we didn't fall into the water. I should have taken photographs but was more concerned with my glasses not being swept off my face by the overhanging sloe and hawthorn and falling in the very sludgy looking water. Several footpaths in that area have been temporarily closed due to the HS2 construction work but it is not always clear which ones and where they are diverted to.

Moral of the tale: always carry a pair of secateurs with you, a phone or camera for reporting and do your bit to make the footpaths a joy to walk on for all.



A Winter Walk in Witney.

Footpath Matters by David Godfrey

Diversions, etc.

The list of modification orders is now 46 outstanding cases, of which seven are to correct anomalies. Four of these have already been confirmed and are only in the list until the time limit for appealing to the High Court expires. There are 30 diversion cases outstanding.

Nick Moon's claim for a byway open to all traffic (BOAT) in Dean Wood, Spelsbury has been confirmed subject to the 40 metres at the Charlbury end becoming a restricted byway. The difference is that motorised vehicles, other than those for the disabled, are prohibited on a restricted byway. This is the extension of Water Lane in Charlbury, where one often needs a boat to get through.

On Noke BR10 the diversion and creation order has been made; there are objections, but if confirmed the result will be a bridleway extension to BR8 opposite the drive to Upper Woods Farm and a footpath exit opposite FP7 on the Green Belt Way, both of which will remove the need for walking or riding along the masochists' paradise which is the B4027.

Two diversions are proposed at the Whitehill quarry on the A40 near Burford. The first will take horse riders round the edge of the quarry extension; pedestrians will be able to use the definitive line when the haul road (which will be in a deep cutting) is not in use. The second will move the west end to the east rather than the west of the farmhouse.

A complicated diversion and creation order has been made west of Bridewell Farm at North Leigh, where a claim for the former Burford road has resulted in an order to downgrade this to restricted byway and byway, while a new restricted byway will run north-south from Bridewell Farm Cottages to North Leigh Lane.

Work has started at Warren Crescent; we await the dedication when the work is complete.

Other Matters

The fence which I reported on Lewknor FP1 on the Thame Outer Circuit has been removed and a new farm gate installed. I have walked the complete circuit, and a few problems remain.

The proposed caravan site at Britchcombe Farm next to the White Horse and the proposed warehouses at Waterstock have attracted strong local opposition; both have gone mysteriously quiet at the time of writing.



The operation to remove accumulated silt from the Blenheim Park lakes has caused the paths at the north end of the Queen Pool to be diverted so that the path into Woodstock now leads right in front of Blenheim Palace. Work is scheduled to last until December. The accumulated silt is to be dumped to form an artificial mound, which will be seeded with grass, north of the gate at the former Rose & Crown.

The knees-on-nose stiles on Tiddington FP5/6 at the railway have been replaced with proper stiles at two sites and a gap north of the railway; the fallen trees have also been removed. Work was undertaken by the Ramblers Thame & Wheatley maintenance team



Stephen Warren's walk at Hinksey

A wet winter followed by a hot summer.

Sue Crisp's Kidlington walk



A cooling dip followed by a refreshing drink in the welcome shade at the Jay's.



Admiring the view on the Aldworth walk.



A sociable lunch on the Brill walk.

Donate a Gate Scheme by Jenny Byrne.

When I took over as Chairman, I inherited Jim's set of minutes dating back to 2005. Realising I was ignorant of the past workings of the committee I thought I had better do some reading. Fortunately, minutes dated before 2005 are archived so I was spared reading the complete history.

It became apparent there was little documentation about the locations of gates we had funded. Mike Wykes furnished me with the financial facts and figures of monies we had donated, to which organisations and on which dates. So, I took on the project of producing a map showing their locations. The resulting map is now on our updated display board which we took to Wychwood Fair.

Since 1998 we have allocated £25,066 in general grants to support various projects e.g. Finger posts for d'Arcy Dalton Way and a trailer for the Cotswold Wardens. And £6,203 to fund 43 gates under the Donate a Gate Scheme which was started in 2009. It would seem that OCC was rather slow at engaging with the OFS so the first 5 gates are actually on The Chiltern Way in Bucks.

I wish to thank Liz Adams and Judith Secker for their help with this project, which I really enjoyed. In the process I became more familiar with Oxfordshire and more importantly learned...

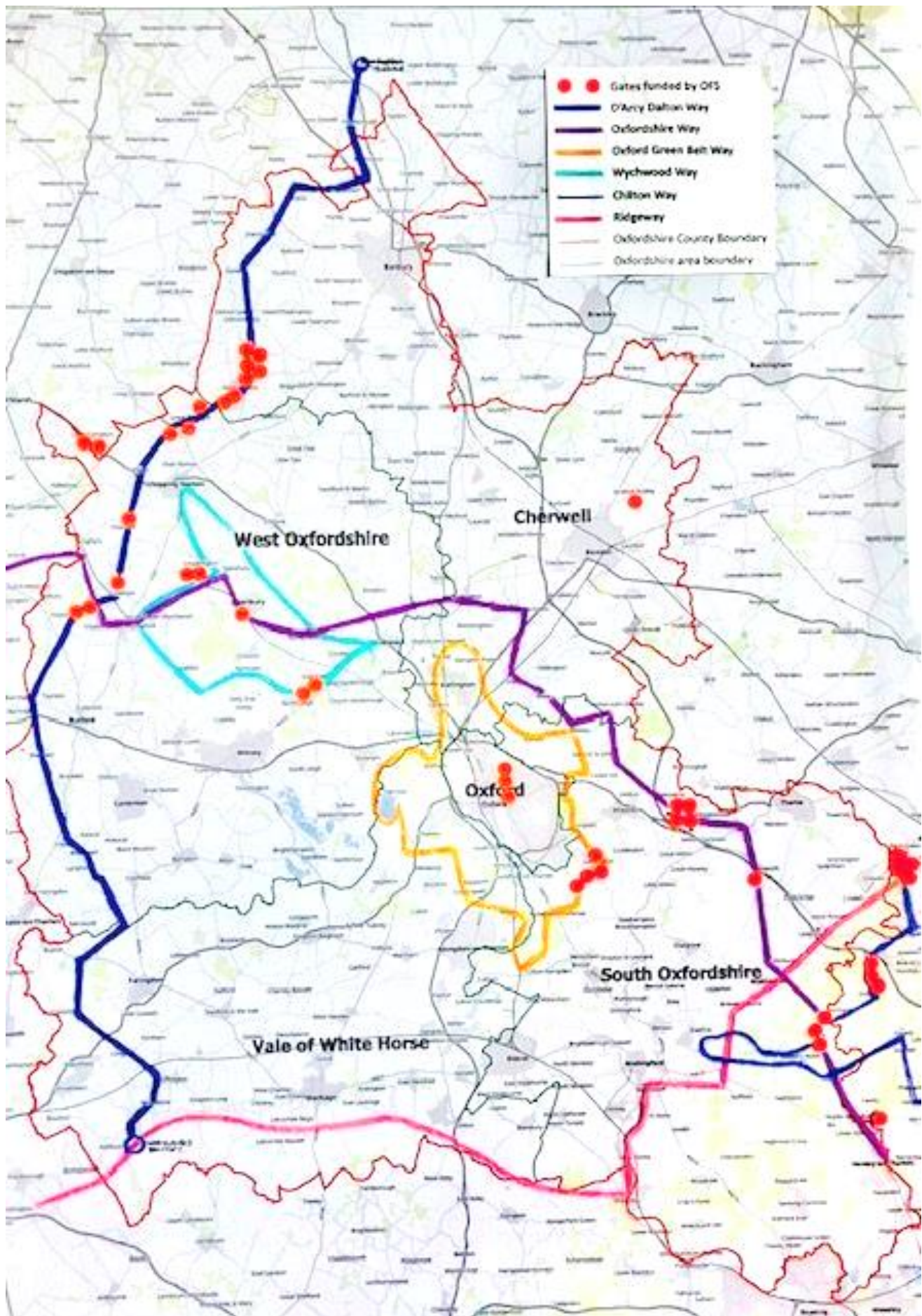
WHICH 'WAYS' WENT WHERE!



Photos courtesy of Tony Graeme.

The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens make good use of the trailer funded by OFS in 2018.





Red dots indicate gates funded by OFS



Sarsden Cross 2016 Survey.

D'Arcy Dalton Way needs our help.

When an experienced walker of many long-distance paths cannot find his way on the DDW there is a problem and we need to do something. There is poor signage, broken stiles, impossibly thick, overgrown hedges, and several of the gates we funded have not got our logo.

Our last survey was in 2016 and clearly we need another one. Along with the Green Belt Way it is proposed we also do the D'Arcy Dalton Way in 2024. It's going to be a busy year! Incidentally that seasoned walker is Tim Cadel and he has just joined OFS. Welcome Tim and thanks for high-lighting problems you encountered and for volunteering with the survey.

The D'Arcy Dalton Way was created to mark the Oxford Fieldpaths Diamond Jubilee in 1986. Nick Moon devised the route and has written books on the subject so it is he who is best suited to overseeing next year's survey. I know it is rather premature but at 66 miles in length it would be great if as many of you could submit walks for next summer's programme to involve sections of the DDW. In the meantime if you walk any sections and find a problem please inform Nick and report it to CAMs.

How to report a footpath problem to CAMS by David Godfrey

Did you know that you can report these problems on the OCC website (doesn't guarantee quick action though, unless something is dangerous, but it sends an immediate e-mail to the person in charge).

1. Go to the council website.
2. Search for "footpath".
3. Go to "Reporting a problem on a public right of way" (should be third in the list).
4. On the screen that appears, click the "Report an issue" button.
5. If you haven't used the system before, you may be asked to enter your details.
6. A map of the county appears, with a search option. Enter the name of the nearest village in the Search box, and select from the list that appears (for some reason everything is duplicated).
7. Zoom in and out using the + and - buttons, and move the map around so that the position of the problem is shown. The screen may be slow to update.
8. Click "Report a problem".
9. Click the hand icon, and select the path which has the problem.
10. Click the yellow triangle and click as near as possible to the point on the map where the problem is.
11. Enter the details as instructed (the list of problem types is limited; choose the nearest description available).
12. Click the Close button (this is essential otherwise the system will get confused).
13. To report further problems, repeat steps 6 (if needed) and 7-12.
14. **IMPORTANT: Bookmark this page so you don't have the faff of steps 1-5.**



A very neat solution to a large and difficult problem!

Photos Liz Adams

WYCHWOOD FOREST FAIR 2023 by Margaret Jones

On Sunday 9th July Jenny Byrne, Marsaleete Anderson and Margaret Jones attended the Wychwood Forest Fair at Foxburrow Community Wood to publicise the walks and work of OFS.

OFS has been attending the Fair for a number of years and as with previous years almost 100 people visited our table and information board in the Community Marquee.

This year we had a new updated board with a map showing the position of OFS donated gates throughout the County; the number of red dots on the map is impressive. Visitors to our stand were shown walks programmes, examples of where we walk, former newsletters and our website address. Great interest was shown in the Society but we must wait to see if new OFS members are attracted. 2 people who told us that they regularly walk the Darcy Dalton Way were asked to report any path issues to OFS. We were asked to report issues with paths along the Evenlode River; I have seen fly tipping in the Evenlode River.

The 3 of us were surprised to learn that there had been a Red Arrows Fly Past during the Fair, the noise level in the Marquee had been enough to drown out a Fly Past.

As last year after the timely appearance of sunshine for the start of the Fair just after lunch there was a sudden downpour which brought crowds into the Marquee. We were very interested the first time this happened to see that a sudden shower during the day is an advantage for OFS publicity.

Near to the Fair site there is an intricately carved bench to honour the memory of Alan Spicer who initiated the Wychwood Forest Trust. When looking for a quiet place to eat a sandwich it was a lovely surprise to find the bench.

Although the Fair opened at 11am the Fair participants were asked to be on-site by 9:30am when the entry gate would be closed. By the time the Fair closed at 4:30pm the 3 of us felt that we had had a good day but we were ready to make our way home.

The idea to attend the Wychwood Forest Fair was first suggested by much missed Jim Parke. We thank him for this.



A Tit Bit about a Kite Bite! By Margaret Jones.

During a picnic lunch there was a rush of air and the view of a Kite taking flight from ground level next to my friend. "What just happened" I asked. "The kite took half of my lunch" was the reply. The speed and audacity of the lunch box raid was impressive, also rather alarming. It may be necessary to guard one's sandwich lunch if Kites are noticed circling overhead.

