

OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 24: September 2018

FROM THE CHAIRMAN: Elizabeth Adams

This year we have seen extremes in the weather; the Winter was cold, grey and felt as though Spring would never arrive. But arrive it did - wonderful blossom and from dark bare branches to young green leaves almost overnight. Snowdrops were plentiful and, as daylight lengthened, beautiful displays of bluebells in the beech woods. It seems to have been dry since May, apart from the occasional downpour. Those members who went on the residential trip to North Yorkshire enjoyed fine sunny days, ideal for walking. The footpaths everywhere have dried out and in places are cracked, and nettles, that bane of walkers, are wilting in the heat!

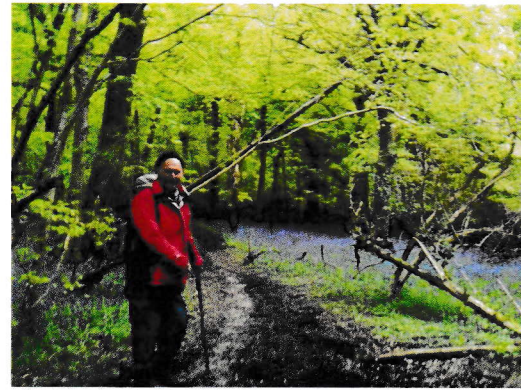
Regardless of the weather, the walking programme remains full, leaders offering both new footpaths to explore as well as the familiar. The winter walks tend to be shorter and closer to home, but as the days get longer new starting points become inviting even though they are further away for most, but OFS members are always adventurous.

Information on The Oxfordshire Way, one of the county's long-distance paths (from Bourton on the Water to Henley), has in the past been downloadable from the Oxfordshire County Council Countryside website. With budgetary constraints it is no longer being updated. Nick

Moon has, therefore, undertaken to write a new book which will include circular walks leading from The Way. The Committee felt that this was a project to be supported by OFS and a donation has been made towards the printing costs, as well as a commitment to fund gates to replace stiles, which, I hope, will make The Oxfordshire Way more accessible for more people.

Increasing accessibility to the countryside, by replacing awkward or damaged stiles with gates, is a project which I feel that OFS should support as the Society has substantial funds which were generated in the past by sponsored walks and donations. Our charitable status requires us to '*do public good*', and I can see no more obvious way in which we can do this than by supporting parish councils and the local charities, such as the Cotswold Wardens, in assisting them to fund the purchase of gates. If you feel there are stiles that need replacing, please contact me, or a member of the committee. The committee meets every two months; diversions and planning matters are discussed, David Godfrey and Nick Moon providing invaluable knowledge to allow informed comment.

I would like to thank all the committee for their contributions during the year, and the walks leaders who go out in all weather conditions to check and then lead the walks which give so much pleasure to all members.



photos: Lesley Fraser

FOOTPATH MATTERS:

David Godfrey

Diversions, etc.

The diversion order for the Oxfordshire Golf Course has been confirmed; this should sort out the mess left when the golf course was built.

The County Council is still considering 32 claims to upgrade restricted byways to byways open to all traffic.

There is a proposal to divert Sandford St. Martin BR13 east of Enstone Airfield to make way for 28 houses to be sold at £1,000,000 apiece, together with a Bentley museum, for the benefit of boy-racers who already do silly speeds down the access road. There are 260 objections to the planning application, on grounds of noise, traffic and the rest.

There is also a proposal for a marina at Cholsey adjacent to the Wallingford bypass; no diversion is proposed, but there will have to be a bridge to take the Thames Path over the marina entrance.

There is a new plan for industrial units on Heyford Airfield, with the prospect of sorting out the routes of Somerton FP13 along the northern boundary and Ardley BR29 which is now a dead end; it is also proposed to join up the severed routes of Portway and Avesditch (the latter by a roundabout route).

Other Matters

The so-called consultations on the Oxford Expressway have generated a lot of protest, with the likely route of the road, if it is built, shrouded in fog.

The new version of CAMS is now available, with the possibility of uploading photos. There is, however, an extra step in the reporting process (you have to choose the footpath before reporting) - which is not intuitive.

IN MEMORIUM

It is with sadness we report the passing of **Margaret Ibbott**, who, with her husband Jack, was an active and influential member of OFS for many years. In fact, in 2010, both Jack and Margaret were awarded **Honorary Life Membership** for their contributions to the Society.

A year of activity.

AUTUMN

September 9th: Letcombe Regis



photos: Lesley Fraser

"Is not this a true autumn day? Just the still melancholy that I love - that makes life and nature harmonise. The birds are consulting about their migrations, the trees are putting on the hectic or the pallid hues of decay, and begin to strew the ground, that one's very footsteps may not disturb the repose of earth and air, while they give us a scent that is a perfect anodyne to the restless spirit. Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns."

George Eliot [Letter to Miss Lewis, 1841]"

Skittles Evening: 28th September

Much jollity and a surprising amount of competitiveness contributed to a really successful social event. Wimbledon players have nothing to match the grim concentration on the faces of some of our 'bowlers'! Jim Parke kept the score in the face of much 'help' from the more vigilant participants and then took a photo of winning team before we all adjourned for an excellent pub supper.



photo: Jim Parke

And there was much jollity on Margaret Jones' walk through **Horton**, 30th September



photo: Jenny Byrne

October: John Eyre nails on a plaque on one of two new gates at **East End**



Photo: Jim Parke

October: 1st Aid Course

A First aid course was organised by Committee member Jenny Byrne for walks leaders. The course was run by John Dawson and John Attree at the Scout Headquarters in Rose Hill. All who attended the two evening sessions agreed it was very useful and though we hope never to need these skills we all felt more confident with dealing with situations that might arise. The course was oversubscribed so we hope to run another this autumn. You can never have too many first aiders!

WINTER

December 16th: Blenheim

Mince pies and mulled wine



Photo: Stephen Wallace

***Winter is nature's way of saying,
"Up yours."***

Anon

***Winter either bites with its teeth
or lashes with its tail.***

Anon

February 25th

Scutchmer's Knob/Cwichelms' Barrow



Photo: Celia Haddon

Standing on the top of this mysterious place, looking out over the landscape, one senses the profound sense of power this place once held. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records how the marauding Danes, claiming the site in 1006, (during the reign of the incompetent Aethelred II) jeered at the conquered English belief that the place held a curse, a power over their enemies. This is the landscape of Alfred and, before him, the great 7th-century warrior king, Cwichelm. Cwichelmeshlæw may have been believed to be his burial-mound or the site of one of his battles and therefore gave rise to a superstition about its power. Recent archeological exploration has posited the idea that it may have Bronze Age origins; a conical flat topped mound nearly 50 yards in diameter. There is some speculation that a square building, of Romano-British origin, may have stood atop it. Its prominence made it an ideal rallying point for armies, being on a long distance route, as well as an ideal location for signalling or beacons. Later

until 1620, it became the meeting point of the Shire Moot (market). From here you can see for miles – northwards over the Thames valley and southwards to the North Downs of Berkshire. Half close your eyes and imagine yourself as a jubilant Viking warrior awaiting the army that never came.

*When icicles hang upon the wall
And Dick, the shepherd blows on nail,
And milk comes frozen home in pail...*

William Shakespeare

25th February: West Ilsley

Flummoxed!



Photo: Celia Haddon

Snow, mud, sleet, mud; and then more rain,
more mud, more snow and cancelled walks...

SPRING

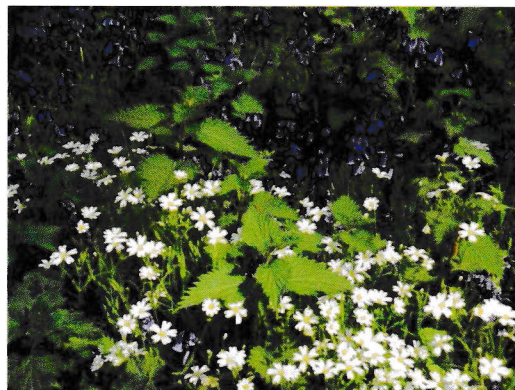
The year's pleasant king...

Things do only get better!

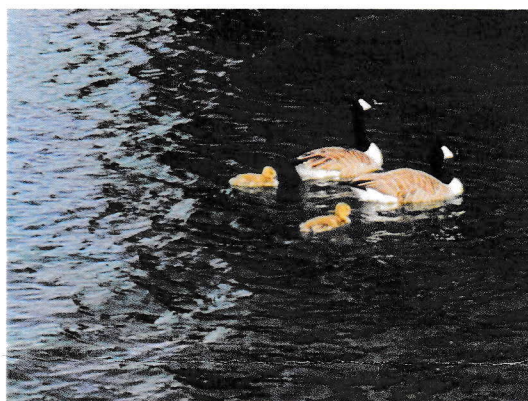
March 10th Hey Lock, Bampton



April: Ashdown House



June: The Thames Path



Old Father
Thames at
St John's
lock, below
Lechlade.



Photos: Lesley Fraser

SUMMER

MAY IN MALHAM

**Marion Hanbury Brown
& Marsaleete Anderson**



We all thoroughly enjoyed our few days in Malhamdale - in glorious weather.

Newfield Hall is set in handsome grounds with mature trees, including a copper beech which was in "Spring Splendour". Over the fence were sheep with their lambs in lush green fields, the whole scenario idyllic.

We were welcomed with a generous tea, many of us sitting outside in the sunshine. An introductory saunter transformed one's image of the Pennine Way as we strolled beside a babbling brook with no sign of a bleak boggy moor. The pace was significantly slower than the exhausting small dot which whizzed round the screen on the new digital display at the evening walks briefing, mesmerising us all. Apparently the altitude whizzed along as well. The first day's walks were from the house. Marion chose the medium or, to be politically correct, "option 2", on the first day so as to be home in time for tea on the lawn again, with plenty of reading time before the next speeding dot session. We had good views of Malham Cove and Gordale Scar on option 2 and Weets Top where option 3 were headed. The option 3 group clocked up nearly 7 miles of walking, which still allowed time to explore several villages and the "cathedral of the

Dales", at Kirby Malham, at leisure. Marion had her picnic lunch cooling her feet in the river at the village of Malham where option 2 walkers crossed paths with those on options 1 and 3. The way back along the river was full of the images captured by David Hockney in his Spring i-pad paintings, which Marion had visited at Saltaire on her way to Newfield Hall.

The middle day's walks began from Appletreewick. Marion joined in with Marsaleete and the option 3 lot and we marched smartly up hill, relieved we had dutifully put in the extra layers. Simon's Seat looked an awfully long way away. We were in for a surprise as what looked, on the face of it, to be a bleak route was anything but as we followed a pretty hidden valley, and the began to climb to be rewarded by splendid views from Simon's Seat.



We did a rapid circuit to see the Strid, then, back down the River Wharfe to Bolton Abbey - to be in time to join the others who had opted for more time to linger over the spring beauty of Wharfedale, as well as exploring the ancient interior of the Abbey, before we all caught the bus back to Newfield Hall.

In the evening we were entertained by Wendy Hogan, a Dales native, who described how she and her husband established the Dales High Way. We actually coincided with this route on our final day's walk to the summit of Ingleborough, one of the Dales "Three Peaks". It was a rewarding climb to the table-top with the camaraderie of a lunch stop in the stone windbreak and views of Morecambe Bay and

the Lake District. Then we all traipsed down via **Gaping Gill** to



Photo: Jenny Byrne

Converge on everyone at the pub for a swift half before the return bus. The indoor pool was back in action for a few of us aficionados to gratefully stretch out horizontally.

Marion had reservations about "disaggregated" parkin as the biscuit crumbs in the pudding, (or was it dessert? - it should be "pudding" in Yorkshire, surely!) were described by the vibrant young Polish woman who introduced the courses for our final dinner, and would vote for rhubarb crumble instead.

As always in their UK houses, the essential ingredients of an HF holiday, based on a sense of community with rewarding walks to suit all tastes, were very much to the fore. The culture of mixing and being inclusive with those on different holidays and particularly with those travelling on their own makes for interesting dinner companions and conversations. We enjoyed meeting people from near (Yorkshire) and far (Northern Ireland, the USA and Australia). We all had a jolly time and did not need *fropat souter worse** (the anagram we had to solve in the digital quiz evening).

*waterproof trousers

Just look at that sky!



Photo: Lesley Fraser

Waterstock 23rd May



Another kissing gate; how many is that?

*
pto for answer

Gt. Coxwell Tithe Barn July 21st



A long, hot, summer walk - led by Eme Pilgrim

USING THE WEBSITE:

<http://www.ofs.org.uk>

Did you know?

If you click on the calendar link, then the date you are interested in, you can do two things to find the meeting place:

1) open a map showing the location of a meeting place on a map whose size can be varied.

2) go to **other coordinates** to find a satnav code.

e.g:

Wednesday 4th 7.00pm

(1) **SP546072 2.5 miles** - click on this to open the map.

(2) **Other coordinates** - click on this to find a list which includes the satnav postcode **OX3 9HZ**

Meet at the entrance to Bury Knowle Park, Headington, by the bus stops.

LOOKING FORWARD

ANNUAL OUTING

Gloucester. Saturday 15th September.
Cost £18

The coach will depart from Pear Tree Service station at 8:30am, returning at approx. 7:00pm.

A morning walk of 5.5 miles along the Banks of the River Severn, returning to Gloucester Quay via the canal. This is a fairly level walk with four stiles.

A pre-booked lunch will be served at the Brewhouse and Kitchen where tables overlooking the waterfront have been reserved. This is an optional lunch; the cost is not included and must be paid for on the day. The menu will be sent at a later date.

The coach will depart from Gloucester at 5:30pm allowing time in the afternoon to explore the Quays, museum, shops and cathedral.

If you have missed the chance to book this, there may be late availability; contact Anne Partridge 01865 767932

SPRING HOLIDAY

A 4-night stay (3 days walking) is proposed for Monday, May 13th – 19th, at **Church Stretton** in Shropshire. The basic cost is £439.00. Please refer to the enclosed page for all the details and a booking form.

*

Would you believe – 35 gates since 2009!