

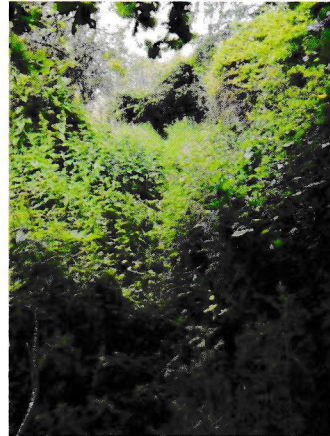
OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 25: September 2019

FROM THE CHAIRMAN: Elizabeth Adams

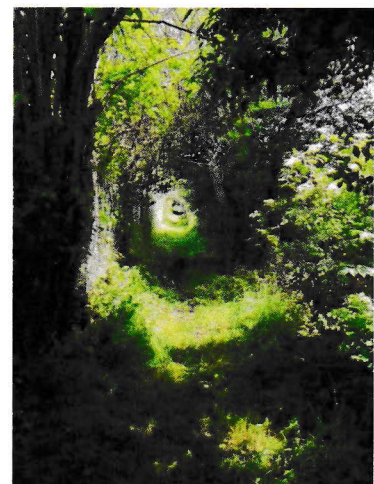
In the annual report 2018 I wrote that OFS had agreed to fund kissing gates to replace stiles in the parish of Leafield; however, the landowner has decided to exercise his right to refuse and will install new stiles. We need to make sure that this is done. This is disappointing, as the introduction of gates opens up the countryside to more people; gates are much easier to negotiate than stiles. Over the last ten years OFS has helped to fund, either partially or fully, over 30 new gates. I feel this an important part of our duty as a charity 'to do public good' and we have significant reserve funds to be able to do this. These funds were raised over thirty years ago by sponsored walks, so if you have stiles in your parish which need replacing let me know and we can start the inquiries to get the work underway. A second way in which OFS members have been making a contribution to increasing accessibility to the countryside is taking a pair of secateurs with them on walks and trimming back overhanging greenery, not being too energetic in the bird nesting season.; taking care to tidy away the risings into the base of the hedge so as not to trip up the unwary walker; and reporting broken stiles and impassable paths to the Countryside Services enabling them to prioritise work. At the beginning of June members of OFS and Ramblers tackled a footpath in Oxford (FP80), which runs above the Lye Valley Nature Reserve and along the boundary of the Churchill Hospital. Nettles were pulled up by the roots or scythed down, and overhanging branches on dead trees were removed and laid down to consolidate boggy stretches of the path. On the way back to the start we collected four large bags of rubbish: bottle, cans, food wrappers and household rubbish. The before-and-after pictures show what a difference eight individuals can achieve in two hours.



They shut the road through the woods ... Kipling



but we worked hard -



and look at the result!

As you can see OFS has given a donation to the Cotswold Wardens so that a very, very useful trailer can be added to their equipment. Obviously, they are delighted, as were we, when they came, at short notice, to our AGM in 2018, to give a diverting and interesting talk on their work and the Cotswolds. OFS has charitable status and the money we raise from your subscriptions not only covers the cost of printing, of this newsletter and the calendar, and postage but also goes into a pot from which we can fund improvements to our walking environment

Hello Liz

Finally our new trailer had its first outing yesterday at Centenary Wood, Charlbury and very useful it was too and proudly admired by the team.

I send you receipts of how the money you kindly donated was spent. We also bought a lock, tarpaulin and the sign you see on the back which can be easily read by people pulling up behind in traffic.



It will certainly be a great addition to our work and many thanks again.

Best wishes, Gerry - Cotswold Warden

FOOTPATH MATTERS: David Godfrey **Diversions, etc.**

The diversions across the Oxfordshire Golf Course have been waymarked and cleared, including the stretch of Oxfordshire Way, which was badly signed beyond the diversions; this should stop people getting lost in this area. The County Council has rejected all but one of the 32 claims to upgrade restricted byways to byways open to all traffic; the exception is because part of the road was claimed as well. The claims to upgrade various bridleways and footpaths to byways open to all traffic (allowing vehicular access) are still under investigation, but are likely to lead to upgrades to 'restricted byway' (excluding motor vehicles). The proposal to divert Sandford St. Martin BR13 east of Enstone Airfield has been dropped; instead, access to the site is to be from the west.

I have asked for a bridleway to be provided to link the severed ends of Green Lane alongside the access.

The County Council is now trying to deal with the backlog of definitive map claims, some of which go back to 2003.

Two diversions are proposed at Great Tew on the same footpath; one is to avoid the house at Tracey Barn, and the other will clear up the dead end on the definitive map through the eyesore of Soho Farms (to say that I have seen better architecture in Maasai villages is probably insulting Maasai villages).

Oxford City Council has made a diversion order for the proposed houses at Warren Crescent; the copy received by some consultees was defective, and the order must be re-advertised.

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, still shrouded in fog.

The Flood Alleviation Scheme looks as if it is about to go to public inquiry, as there have been objections to the compulsory purchase orders.



Photo - Lesley Fraser

With all the high winds lately I have had numerous occasions to drag small branches out of the way - and always forgot to take photos (I will forget my head one of these days).

Sometimes I was with a group, and on a couple of occasions I was asked if I could remove a complete tree: no hope

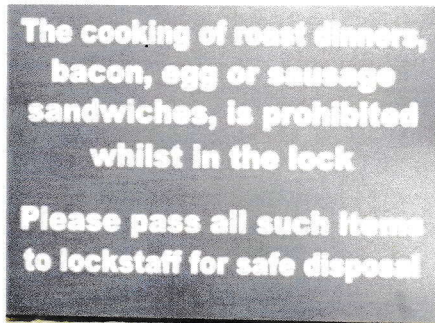


Photo - Lesley Fraser

USE THEM OR LOSE THEM

From -The Walk magazine

-teach us delight in simple things

Central government is compiling a comprehensive, legally binding register of footpaths which is supposed to be complete by 2025. But if the paths are impassably overgrown or unused the register will become pointless

Once upon a time, when there were no cars, trains or bicycles, no phones, no pylons, and pretty poor roads to boot, our fore-fathers walked. If you are descended from farming stock or wealth and position, (perhaps, even, a knight?) then you rejoiced in the luxury of a horse; or a donkey - if you were down on your luck... but mostly you walked.

Naturally you took the best possible route across the country, be it for three miles or thirty; routes that were easy on the foot, easy on the eye, dry for the most part, with regular points for shelter and water.

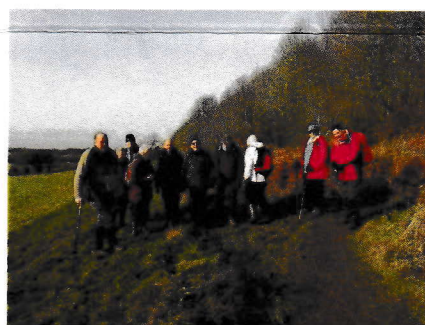
So you built up, over generations, a fitness of heart and leg, a sense of direction, a knowledge of the sky, an understanding of birds, trees, fields, flowers. Above all, you had time to think.

When we walk these trodden ways we have the dust of history on our boots. The 'planners' who would bury this inheritance beneath 'new-builds', motorways, or the estates of the rich and influential, are burying the sense of ourselves.

We need to clear the weeds, report the dangerous stiles, prune the brambles, clean the waymarks - *regularly* - if we are to give ourselves the chance to enjoy the land we have inherited; to give our grandchildren and their grandchildren, and all the unthought-of future generations, a chance to explore and delight in our countryside.

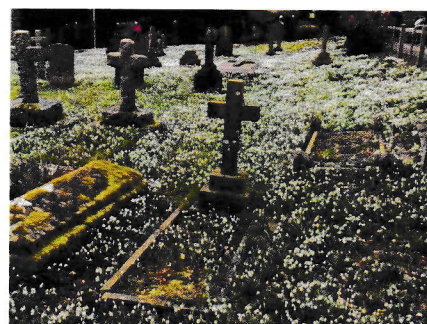
Above all, we should enjoy the many things that walking through the landscape has to offer: good companionship, fresher air, challenge, adventure, a chance to open eyes and ears, and sometimes, just a lucky moment when you'll confront a fully grown hare; or spot a field mouse scurrying, see a falcon hurtling earthwards, a kingfisher emerging with its catch in a spray of light, or the dropping of a calf in the field hardby.

We walk the footpaths for pleasure, pleasure for ourselves and all those who will follow - if we keep the paths open!



A pause for a breather - but where are we?

Photos - Lesley Fraser



Snowdrop walk to Ewelme, February

Annual Outing-Sept: Janice Ure

A day trip to another part of the country was to **Gloucester**. A Roman town firstly called Glevum from the root Gloew 'glow' meaning bright or shining place -hence the modern footpath named the Glevum Way. The trip was jointly organised by Sue Crisp, Ann Partridge, Jenny Byrne and me.

We set off on the coach on a beautiful sunny morning without any forecast of rain. We walked along side the River Severn, had a short break sitting by the River bank, returning through Hempstead to walk beside the Gloucester & Sharpness Victorian Canal, once the broadest & deepest canal in the world, and still huge.



Photo - Lesley Fraser

We crossed over the canal on the Llanthony Bridge, arriving at our lunch venue, The Brewhouse about 1p.m. They served an excellent lunch. Then people were free to enjoy Gloucester in the afternoon. This was a 5.5 mile walk & I hope that everyone enjoyed the day trip.

Here are some comments:

- *Gloucester was a very good choice as was the venue for lunch.*
- *Very good idea for an outing - greatly enjoyed exploring the city as it turned out to be Open Heritage Day. Thank you everyone.*
- *Really enjoyed walking along the Severn and the willow trees with the sun shining on them.*



Photo - Janice Ure

LONGMYND, CHURCH STRETTON, MAY 2019

The skies were blue, the sun was bright
And the hills of Shropshire had some height.
"Damn steep!!" was one description.
There were bluebell woods and flowery meadows.
Beautiful views and good walking fellows.
We saw Spring lambs, butterflies, pit-ponies too
And the mountains of Wales stood out in the blue.

Our trails took us from Bog to peak
Along Stiperstones Ridge - not for the weak!
Over The Long Mynd and up to Pole Bank
Past the Castle of Stokesay - the best in its rank.
An ancient stone circle and stiles galore
It has to be said - their condition quite poor!

The going was hard and sometimes quite gruelling
So back to the house for much needed refuelling.
The food was great, the service cheerful
And on our last evening we had an earful -
Of music performed by our non-walking HF'ers
A pleasant end for us OFS'ers.

I mustn't forget to mention the pool,
26 degrees was not too cool
For many of us to partake of a swim
To help ease those aches of body and limb.



Jenny Byrne

In your own words:

'These HF holidays are successful because the highest standard is sought in every detail. Thanks to Martin, Mark and Alan for the quality of the walks and leadership; stunning routes led by incredibly well-informed leaders.'

'The quiet early mornings full of promise; birds singing, a train slipping along the valley, the far hills rising to embrace an open ocean of sky.'



Photo - Joe Coulson

'So clear a day that the far-flung Malverns were in perfect focus.'

'The air, the pure air, up on those moors, away from the world; listen to the song of the birds, watch them wheeling and diving.'

'The companionship and the friendliness of everyone.'



photo - Gabrielle Keighley

'Meadows bursting with flowers.'

'I managed three walks on the trot, despite my toes...'



Photo - Judith Secker

*Michael and Bill walked up the hill and enjoyed tea and scones with the rest of us at **The Bog**; much nicer than it sounds. **The Bog** was once the site of a lead mine providing employment for a large community - large enough to have 106 children in the schoolhouse. This now houses a community café and craft shop staffed by volunteers.*

It was downhill from there, all the way to the pub.'

'At last the top - the Stiperstones Ridge and, OMG what a descent...'



Photo - Gabrielle Keighley

A long, hot shower after a hard walk.' 'I especially liked my little bath and my big white towel.'

'1st class accommodation - a four-poster bed. Wonderful food!'

From the leaders:

'Our best memories are of Bill and Michael - they're inspirational! And OFS walkers adapt amazingly well when faced with real hills...'

Clare Balding Explores a Watermill

- Elaine Steane

It was Sue Crisp, OFS Member, who suggested to me when I was feeling 'flat' after getting the Roman Way published, 'Why don't you write a walking guide on windmills?' I took up the suggestion with alacrity, expanding it to include watermills, steam mills and the innovative Archimedes Screws that use water power to produce green electricity.

So Milestones to Millstones was born, a guide giving seventeen circular walks in Oxfordshire and a bit beyond, each including a mill but giving lots of architectural and natural history interest. On a cold, bright January day, a group who had helped me in various ways set off to walk part of the Mapledurham Mill walk, that was later broadcast on Radio 4 Ramblings on February 14th 2019.

Clare was particularly delighted with Mapledurham's location of being where *The Eagle has Landed* starring Michael Caine was filmed, and by the rumble of the 15th century water mill on the River Thames. Included in the book are many of the milling-related idioms that are used in everyday language, such as 'A millstone around your neck', 'As calm as a millpond', 'Keep your nose to the grindstone', and 'First come first served'. Clare enjoyed quoting many of them.

Further along the walk we passed the back of Hardwick House, which was the inspiration for Toad Hall in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. A friend of mine, Nick Quartley, read the passage of Mole's scary experience in the Wild Wood, which rises above Hardwick House. One of the themes of the broadcast was my cartographic lineage, as my father, Harold Fullard, was the cartographic editor of Philip's Atlases. Many of us remember the Modern School Atlas with its pale blue canvas cover. Nick had been one of the family-and-school-friends team who had helped with the manual alphabetisation of the indexes in pre-computer days. This task

involved huge piles of place names and page that needed to be sorted into the 26 mini boxes, which were then checked and pasted on with cow gum by my geographer mother. Eventually, after many hours, a printed index was produced! Now we would just press 'sort'...

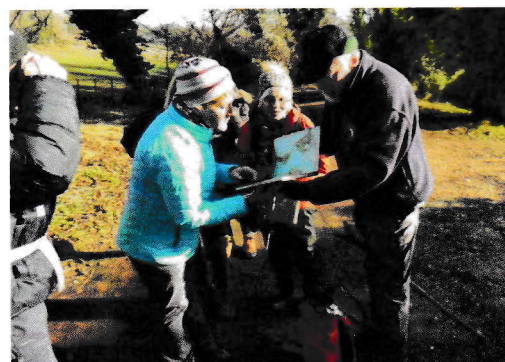
Siobhan is leading the Wantage mill walk on April 27th, and Margaret is leading the Wilton windmill walk on September 21st.

Copies of the book, *Milestones to Millstones: Mill Walks in Oxfordshire and Beyond* ISBN 978-1-909116-58-0 SRA Books 2015, is available from me, bookshops or Amazon, price £9.99

<http://www.milestonestomillstones.co.uk/>



In the Wild Woods above Hardwick House
(Clare is fifth from the left in turquoise jacket)



Looking at a 1962 Philip's Atlas

New Uses for Old Maps - Liz Adams



Photo - Liz Adams

Last autumn I took part in a workshop making paper beads. On the instruction sheet we were asked to bring suitable paper – old music, maps and magazines. Scouring the house looking for something to take I thought about a very tatty OS map: 171 Banbury and Bicester, which was falling apart on the folds.

It proved to be ideal as I could make long strips, 3cm wide tapering to 1cm over the length of the map. The strips were wound round fine wooden skewers, starting with the thicker end. PVA glue painted on the last 10cms to hold the end in place, and a layer of glue over the whole lozenge shaped bead.

Intriguing snippets of map were exposed – Fant Hill, Roman Road, New Barn Farm and Lords Spinney. I interspaced the map beads with green glass beads to represent the footpaths walked.

Some might think this is an inappropriate use of a map but it is recycled into something new and useful and I can always say I have my map with me!

Take a break -

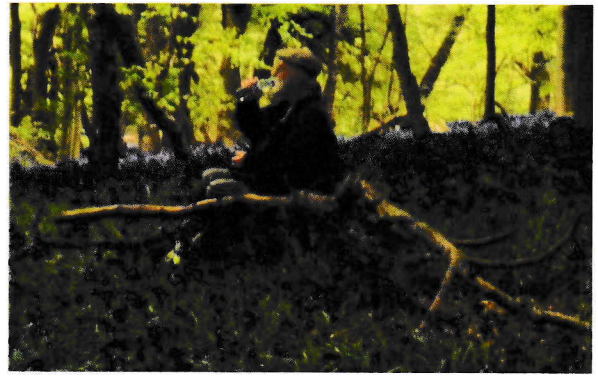


Photo - Lesley Fraser

Blue flowers at the blue hour –
Late-day light in a bluebell wood.
Under branch, below leaf,
billows blue so deep, sea-deep,
Each step is taken in an ocean.
Blue *flor*es at the blue hour:
colour is current, undertow.
Enter the wood with care my love,
Lest you are pulled down by the hue,
Lost in the depths, drowned in blue.

Anon –taken at Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh

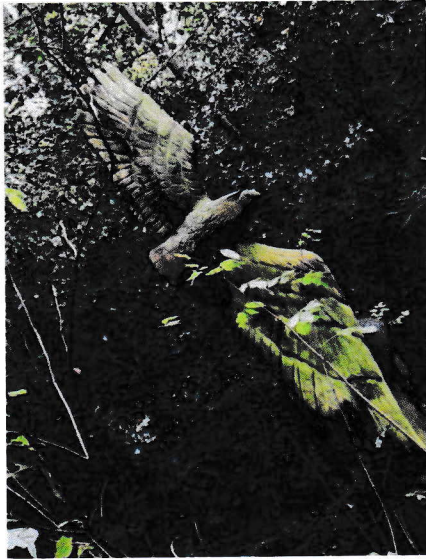


Photo – Lesley Fraser

AND FINALLY:

I really need you to let me know your thoughts about short holidays.

It has proved impossible to book a May break because all the houses with a good supply of single rooms are already booked. There are two reasons for this, I think:

1. an increase in the number of activity holidays (not walking) being offered by HF for which groups are booking well ahead;
2. a shortage of houses with at least 6 single rooms.

I am also hearing from people that they have already visited houses within reasonable travelling distance.

2020 prices continue to increase; those who have signed up for two breaks this year could have one continental break for the same cost. (group prices apply when we book as OFS)

Can you let me know your thoughts:-

Which houses would you like to see offered?

Are you interested in going to European destinations?

Are you prepared to share a room?

Do you have a preference for a particular month?

What about low season trips? (i.e. Winter)

Is there something I have forgotten to ask?

I have difficulty in notifying members of these trips because now I am allowed only to email members who have previously joined a holiday I have organised, and thereby have given me, their email contact.

It is planned to put holiday details on the website but I should alert you to the fact that HF will only hold a booking for 6 weeks from the initial enquiry, when deposits are required.

Those of you who do not have email addresses might, like one member, regularly check with an email-enabled friend for news of breaks away.

If you would like to be on my email list please send me an email specifically giving me permission to email you on OFS business:

lesleygfraser@icloud.com

My computer is password protected and has a strong firewall