



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 21: September 2015

From the Chairman

We are fortunate to live at a time when we can enjoy the 1700 miles of Public Rights of Way in Oxfordshire. The largest part of the path network would have developed during the medieval and post-medieval period when country folk walked from hamlet to village and to the emerging market towns. With the dissolution of the great monasteries and the dispersal of their huge land holdings, the open fields were enclosed, and in the enclosure awards that were made, parish by parish, many of these footpaths were identified on enclosure maps and designated as public rights of way. They form the backbone of today's 21st century path network. Further enclosures were made during the 17th and 18th centuries.

You can find enclosure awards and maps in the County Records Offices. In the article 'Become a detective of lost paths'; I ask members to consider spending a day or two in the Records Office to see if there are any 'lost' paths in the parish where they live. Paths not identified and listed by 2026 will be lost **forever**. The clock is ticking!

The Countryside Access Team carries the responsibility for managing and preserving Oxfordshire's path network. We, the OFS, have the right to send two representatives to each of the four Local Forums who meet twice a year and I believe it is very important to ensure that the Society is represented at these meetings. We all have an obligation to support the work of the County Field Officers and I know that they, in their turn, welcome the encouragement that we, the users of the network, can give them. The time commitment that a member would give is very small; perhaps a total of 6 hours in the year.

The coming year of **2016 is the 90th anniversary** of the founding of our society. To mark the event, the Committee has concentrated upon celebrating the immense contribution that Colonel Wytton Perowne d'Arcy Dalton made to the Society throughout his lifetime. D'Arcy Dalton had the inspiration to initiate and produce a map, based on the Ordnance Survey at a scale of 2 miles to the inch, of some 144 square miles of countryside centred on the City of Oxford. On it are shown all the footpaths and bridleways that the Society then believed were Public Rights of Way. (PRoW) These footpaths had been walked by the Society and reference was also made to Enclosure Award maps. The map was published in 1933, some 15 years before the publication of what could be considered as its successor: the Definitive Map.

After the Second World War d'Arcy Dalton attended many enquiries as part of the process of compiling the Definitive Map that would, for the first time, give legal protection to the PRoW network. He was successful in claiming 135 paths identified and submitted by the OFS, but which the County Council had initially rejected. He also attended hearings where landowners were objecting to paths being claimed by the parish councils. At 57 hearings, d'Arcy Dalton was successful in overcoming every single objection. He was surely the champion and defender of Oxfordshire's footpaths.

If this was not enough, d'Arcy Dalton ensured the financial strength of the Society by promoting, (when he was Chairman of the Society), - in partnership with the Oxford branch of the CPRE which he had founded - a series of sponsored walks during the years 1968 to 1979. These attracted large support from school pupils in Oxford, and this financial contribution formed the basis of the capital funds of the OFS, now totalling some £33,000 and enabling the Society to provide improvements to the entire path network within the county.

[d'Arcy Dalton spots an illegal sign on a public right of way](#)



Photo: Alun Jones

It is appropriate, therefore, to mark our 90th anniversary by submitting a proposal for a Blue Plaque to be placed on the house in Great Milton where for many years d'Arcy Dalton lived.

We have written to the BBC to suggest that an OFS walk be included in Clare Balding's series, 'Ramblings', on Radio 4, as part of the 2016 series. The proposed walk would follow the most southerly section of the d'Arcy Dalton Way, from Longcot to Wayland's Smithy.

Rights of Way Local Forums – OFS Representation

Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Access Team (CAT) hold two meetings of the Rights of Way Monitoring Group (RoWMG) each year, usually in October and April. The User Groups of the Public Rights of Way: the Ramblers, CPRE, Open Spaces Society, British Horse-riding Association, the Chiltern Society, the Cotswold Wardens and the OFS, each send two representatives.

The OFS is currently represented by Nick Moon and myself, or a substitute; Mike Wykes and Liz Adams have acted in this capacity. Other organisations with representation on RoWMG are the NFU and the Country Landowners' Association.

These meetings provide an opportunity for the Team Leader of CAT to review the previous six months, highlighting particular issues of note and looking at the priorities for the next six-month period. An overall summary report of the CAT's countywide activities is included. This gives an indication of the scale of the CAT's workload.

As well as giving details of the operational aspects of CAT, the Definitive Map and Commons section also provides regular reports. This section deals with any potential changes to the PRoW network, such as requests for new paths, path diversions and other modifications etc.

The RoWMG meeting is then followed, (usually a week later), by meetings of four Rights of Way Local Forums, The County's PRoW network is overseen by 4 County Field Officers (CFOs) and 2 Assistants. Each CFO's area roughly coincides with the 4 District Councils.

Thus, Sarah Aldous is CFO North and covers parishes in Cherwell District Council, Dan Weeks is CFO West and covers West Oxfordshire District and the City of Oxford, Arthur McEwan-James is Acting CFO South West and covers the Vale of White Horse District and also some parishes in the western part of South Oxfordshire District, and Jon Beale, CFO South East, covers the remainder of South Oxfordshire.

The Local Forums follow a similar pattern of representation. For example, I normally attend the Vale of White Horse Local Forum, with other OFS members, latterly John

Asbridge or John Eyre. Nick Moon attends the South Oxfordshire Local Forum.

However, we do need more OFS members to attend the 4 Forums to take up our permitted representation. At the Forums the CFO will present a report, usually well illustrated with photographs, on PRoW issues in his/her particular area. The Local Forums allow the opportunity for users of the path network to ask detailed questions on, say, specific paths or to raise issues relating to their area. It is a very good way of getting to know about the work of the Field Officer for their area.

I believe that it is very important that the OFS is fully represented on each of the 4 local Forums. I would be pleased to hear from any member who may be interested in volunteering to become an OFS representative at one of these Forums.

[Jim Parke](#)



Photo: [Jack Sparrow](#)

*THEY shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods*
[From *The Road Through the Woods*](#)
by R Kipling

OFS Annual Meal

On Friday, 27th February, the OFS annual formal meal took place at Oxford/Southfield Golf Club. This was the third time we have organised such a meal and, sadly, numbers fell this year to twenty two participants, including Sir Hugo Brunner (our president) and his wife, Mary Rose. However, it was very pleasing to see a number of members, who now do not manage to walk so much, joining in.

The golf club proved an excellent venue; we enjoyed amongst other things - wild tarragon and mushroom tart with rocket salad; roast loin of pork with Bramley apple sauce and seasonal vegetables; and baked vanilla cheesecake with fruit topping for dessert, wine, then coffee and chocolates to follow. We had the venue for our sole use and it was very pleasant to have time to chat to one another in the bar both before and after the meal.

2016 is our 90th birthday year! Preparations are under way for a celebratory meal so I hope many more of you will attend this function.

[Sue Crisp](#)

Chadlington Gates

On May 31st the Society organised an additional walk in the summer programme; to attach plaques to two gates on Chadlington footpaths. The plaques recorded the financial contribution of £600 from the Society's funds towards their purchase and installation.

[Eileen Mace nailing the plaque](#)



[Photo: Jim Parke](#)

For many years the Society has had a policy of using funds, generated by income from its capital investments, to pay for gates to replace stiles on the county's footpaths under its donate-a-gate policy. These investments, now valued at around £30,000, derive from a number of well-attended Sponsored Walks organised by OFS in the late 1960s - 70s. During the past five years some 20 gates, costing around £4000, have been provided from these funds.

The request for Chadlington funding had been made by Sharon Williams, the Wychwood Project Director. The intention

was to replace 6 stiles in order to create a three mile stile-free circular walk linking Chadlington to the Wychwood Way. The Way itself is a 37 mile circular trail following waymarked rights-of-way around the heart of the former Royal Forest. Sharon was keen to establish some shorter, family friendly walks, accessible to a wide range of walking capabilities.

Once the landowners had agreed to the replacement gates, Sharon was able to enlist the support of the Cotswold Voluntary Warden Service. Dave Scott, Work Party Co-ordinator, organised a team of six volunteers who installed the gates over a five-week period, with the assistance of members of the County Council's Countryside Access Tasks Team.

[Jim, Sharon and Dave at one of the gates](#)



[Photo: Jim Parke](#)

The six gates, of various types, are of metal and have been supplied by the firm Centrewire.

Our Society has made a contribution of £600 towards the scheme's overall cost of £1515. Other installations funded by OFS have included new gates on the d'Arcy Dalton Way, the Oxfordshire Way, and the Oxford Green Belt Way. These donations are the evidence that the Society continues to fulfil one of its major aims – to improve access to the countryside.

[Jim Parke](#)

Fund Raising

Please update your shortcut to Amazon to <http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/redirect-home?tag=oxfordf-21&site=amazon>. Anything bought using this link will result in a donation to the Society.

From the Archives

Minutes of Executive Committee – 1st December 1958

The Committee met at the home of Miss Carr, one of the Committee members, and her sister.

“..the proceedings concluded with a gorgeous feast provided by the Misses Carr and the committee became indistinguishable from a jolly party”.

Minutes of Executive Committee – 13th July 1966

On a more serious note - the members had walked a footpath in the parish of Adderbury where there had been problems of obstruction had been previously reported.

“..the second farmer proved obdurate and antagonistic in the ensuing discussion with Col. Dalton and other members of the party; a discussion which descended at times to the level of near unintelligible, incoherent, emotional, ignorant abuse from the farmer with threats of physical assault from his stick and dog. Col. Dalton and others were completely unable to make the farmer understand that there was a right of way across the field by his farm. The lack of understanding and the stonewalling stupidity of bottomless ignorance displayed by the farmer is a most disturbing example of the unsympathetic views often experienced by us in dealing for those responsible for the land over which public rights of way pass.”

Malvern Hills Weekend

September 5-7 2014

The Malvern Group



Photo: Liz Adams

The weekend away exploring the Malvern Hills was suggested by Sue Crisp and a small group, twelve, of us arrived in Upton-upon-Severn on a sunny Friday afternoon. Led by John and Joyce Dawson we strolled along the banks of the river, looking up to see the southern section of the Malvern Hills. The river bank was rich in insect life, turning away from the river to make the return journey we walked through rich farmland, maize taller than us and pastureland with local Hereford cattle, their gentle faces and huge knees making it obvious why they are bred for meat.

We were based at the Malvern Hills Hotel, where we had lunched some years ago on an annual outing, and the following morning John and June Henville led us on an all day walk on the paths northwards. We walked over Perseverance Hill, where the 14th century allegorical poem, Piers Plowman, is set, on through the deep cutting of Upper Wyche and on to the Worcestershire Beacon. The views were fantastic; the Black Hills in Wales as well as our own Cotswolds were visible, and below us in the fields a great jamboree of VW Campervans of all ages and colours. We walked on to St Anne's Well and the return to the hotel was along the lower wooded footpaths in dappled sunshine.

Climbing to British Camp



Photo: Liz Adams

On Sunday the walk was shorter, this time going south. The first challenge of the morning was climbing up to the Herefordshire Beacon and British Camp. British Camp is an Iron Age Fort which was the reputed site of Caractacus's last stand against the Romans, and was later extended by a medieval castle. Again we had lovely

views all around us. We continued southwards to The Gullet, and picked up the Worcestershire Way for the return leg back to the hotel again walking through woodland. There was time to collect our belongings, have a late lunch and then drive back to Oxford. A great weekend and thanks to Sue for suggesting it.

Liz Adams

Lulworth

It's a sunny Spring Monday in May and – joy! – I am off to West Lulworth for three days of rambling with fellow members of the OFS.

I have already made a brave decision - I will do three 'hard' walks. As always, the anticipation of setting off into the (relatively) 'unknown' prompts a small feeling of apprehension accompanied by the sense of impending achievement. Perhaps, I should adopt a more philosophical stance, as explored by Frederic Gros in his book 'A Philosophy of Walking', to help me along the way - and to divorce myself from the idea that a long walk is 'hard work'. Better to see walking as a form of escape from the idea of identity, a moment of serenity that comes with simply following a path, a life "scoured bare"; in short, a form of pure living. That sounds just the ticket!

So Day One dawns and the delight of striding out from the village of Kingston in the direction of Corfe Castle awaits. I have four companions for a walk that will turn into something of an unrelenting battle against the wind, over Ballard Down to Studland Bay, taking in Old Harry Rocks en-route.

Serenity ?

Food for thought, as I sit drinking my hot chocolate at a calm and sheltered beach cafe at walk's end.

Face 'scoured bare' - absolutement !

So to Day Two and a change in the weather and an 'escape', again with four fellow 'puritans', into the wind and, occasionally, driving rain. It's that 'scoured bare' feeling again as we walk steadily along the Wessex Ridgeway following the Cerne Trail. We meet no-one until we are nearly home and dry when we chance upon two other escapees heading for Cerne Abbas and refreshment.

Mine goes down a treat - chocolat chaud.

Walking back to the bus I catch a glimpse of the gentleman, holding a cudgel, carved into the hillside. I search for a meaning.

Day Three; the sun is shining and the wind has abated. I bottle out of wearing my shorts, rationalising that the footpath will be strewn with nettles. Today, we are a somewhat larger party.

We set out from Weymouth, where the bus has dropped us, and set off down the SW Coastal path; destination Lulworth. This is the simple, pure life, meandering along the cliff top, oblivious to the ups and downs!



Photo: Liz Adams

Who's counting the feet ascended? Not me. I thirst for that first sight of Durdle Door. A chance to reflect on the power of nature!

Then heading home for that final hot chocolate and peace of mind and body.

A wonderful holiday, warm and friendly companions and a sharper appreciation of French existentialist philosophy!

Peter Pettit

How to Report Problems

A collapsing stile, a step designed to accommodate giant legs, way marks that have wandered away, wooden bridges that have succumbed to time and the weather, barbed wire blocking the pathway... this is what you do:

Go to the Countryside Service's website at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/countryside>. Click on 'Access Maps' and then select the 'Countryside Access Map'.

Find and click on the location of the problem. At the bottom of the map, the path you have selected will be specified and a link to allow you to report the problem will appear. Clicking the link will open a small form to fill in.

Become a Detective of Lost Paths

Members who attended the Society's Annual General Meeting heard David Godfrey expressing his concern that there are many potential rights of way in Oxfordshire which, for one reason or another, have not so far been claimed; i.e. 'Lost paths'. Just after World War Two, under the National Parks Act, county councils were required to identify Public Rights of Way and register them on definitive maps. Unfortunately, many rights of way have never been so registered and, consequently, are not, in a legal sense, proven. Many of them are still in regular use, particularly around villages, and are far from 'lost' to those who use them. Others have sadly disappeared completely over time.

A factor that has given urgency to this situation is that the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 has brought in a deadline of 2026. All paths must be recorded on the Definitive Map by 2026 – after this date it will be simply be too late. Many historic paths, i.e. ones that came into existence before 1949, but which are not registered, will be lost forever. This applies specifically to paths which are claimed as being based on such historical records as Enclosure Awards and Tithe Awards.

These Awards relating to parishes often had large scale, detailed maps, showing the routes of paths and roads at a time when the land was being enclosed - in the 18th and 19th centuries. The maps can be studied in conjunction with the actual text of the award, which will often list the routes being set out, with a route description and details of status and width.

On a more positive note, however, it will still be possible to claim paths based on evidence from people who certify that they have walked them over a 20 year period without being challenged by the landowner.

These maps can be found in the County Records Office at St. Luke's Church, Temple Road OX4 2HT. Tel: 01865 398200. Temple Cowley. Other maps for the former Berkshire areas, such as parishes in the Vale of White Horse District, will be found at the Berkshire Records Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF. Tel: 0118 937 5132.

The two main sources for a would-be detective are, therefore, Enclosure and Tithe

Award Maps. Other maps which may be found useful to consult are the 25 inch to the mile (Scale 1:1,250) OS County Series of Oxfordshire, which were produced in the 1890s. The Enclosure and Tithe Maps often show public rights of way. In all cases, a comparison of these maps with the existing Definitive Map might reveal paths and route ways found on the Enclosure/Tithe/early Ordnance Survey maps but which were never recorded on the Definitive Map.

For some parishes evidence of lost paths may be found if at some stage a railway company intended to construct a railway through them, even if they were never built. Railway companies were required to compile plans and books of reference which give varying amounts of detail on public and private rights of way, within the 'lines of deviation' of the proposed railway, and so can be a valuable source of reference.

Those OFS Members who are interested in undertaking such research as a lost-path detective should start with the aid of a large sheet of tracing paper, placed over the Definitive Rights of Way map for their chosen parish. A copy of the large scale Definitive Maps for Oxfordshire is to be found in the reference section of the major libraries.

Other useful locational information to be traced onto the tracing paper are the parish boundary, major and minor roads, rivers, railways, canals and parish churches etc. When the traced map is completed, it can then be compared to the Enclosure, Tithe Map, or First Edition 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey (County Series) of the parish to determine whether any paths shown on the earlier maps are missing from the Definitive Map. If there are, then it could be that this is evidence of a 'lost' PRoW which may be eligible to be claimed.

A very useful book which explains this process in great detail, with worked examples, is 'Rights of Way – Restoring the Record' by Sarah Bucks and Phil Wadey. The Society has purchased a copy of this book which could be lent out to anyone undertaking the research. The County Council's Countryside Access Team's website also has details on how to claim paths.

Jim Parke

Diversions, etc.

More strange goings-on in West Oxfordshire; a diversion order in Churchill has been issued with a misprint which sends the diversion into Cuxham (186/4 instead of 168/4); and another at Witney on the proposed Richmond Homes site has been issued with a map showing the effect of the diversion on a blank map, so that it is impossible to tell why it is needed.

The path at Uffington which has been closed by Network Rail has now reopened, as the County Council refused to prolong the traffic regulation order indefinitely. The Chippinghurst case, which we thought had been dealt with by written representations, is to go to public inquiry. Two adjacent paths in Tetsworth, both heavily obstructed, are the subject of applications for diversion.

Other Matters

The legislation relating to claims for rights of way that are not yet on the Definitive Map is set to change, with the requirement to notify owners and occupiers removed; also we will no longer need to provide copies of documents in the county record office of the authority to whom the claim is made.

On the other hand, the standard of proof is raised from “reasonably alleged to subsist” to “subsists”; that is, a legal document is required or sufficient evidence from documents of lower standard to show that a public right exists.

I have a number of candidates which need further examination, including one passing close to Campsfield detention centre, and one in Wardington to the county boundary near Chacombe. All paths which were in existence prior to 1949 need to be claimed, including those in council estates built before that date.

David Godfrey

The Jack Ibbott Memorial Walk

The third Memorial walk for Jack Ibbott, OFS President, who sadly died in 2012, took place on 23rd May. We started from Dorchester-on-Thames with 14 walkers led by Margaret Jones and were very pleased to be joined by Frances Carter, Jack and Margaret's eldest daughter, who lives in New Ash Green, near Gravesend in Kent. We began by following part of one of Jack's favourite walks included in the booklet Oxfordshire Rambles which he compiled with his wife Margaret.

The route took us to the River Thames, past the Dyke Hills - two large banks and ditches - enclosing a small Iron Age settlement, occupied before the site became more important as a river crossing during the Roman Period. The route then crosses the River Thames at Day's Lock where the International Pooh-sticks championship used to take place before moving to Witney.

From Little Wittenham, the home of the Earth Trust, the route goes to Shillingford Bridge, first traversing Little Wittenham Wood and the farmland beyond. We crossed the River Thames and walked along the Thames Path in Shillingford to our picnic stop, on a grassy bank overlooking the river.

Picnic stop. Frances Carter (nee Ibbott) 2nd from the right



Photo: Jim Parke

From Shillingford we crossed the main road and walked towards the village of Warborough and then through large fields along the Priests' Moor Lane; finally following the left bank of the River Thame back to the hamlet of Overy before walking into Dorchester and through the Abbey grounds back to the start.

Jim Parke

Update of Isle of Wight Walk

As some of you may remember, Barry and I did a successive annual walk of 11 miles on the West side of the Isle of Wight. The first one was in 2008 when we had 14 members on the walk.

The walkers in 2008



Photo: Helen Burlingham

This July we recced the route again, starting as usual on the, now much bigger, ferry from Lymington which, as we were so high, gave us a much better view of the castle. We could see the Tudor walls, windows, rooms and courtyards, as well as the chimneys and canon. The two new ferries are bigger and better, but now have a less frequent service - once an hour only at peak times.

Having disembarked, we walked through Yarmouth, then along the Yar estuary, past the mill, to the Freshwater way, formerly a railway track, a nature lovers' paradise being full of butterflies, such as the marble white, wild flowers and birds. Trees on the way provide shelter from the sun, and several stiles have been replaced, by the IOW Ramblers, with kissing gates; much more convenient.

After 3.5 miles we reached Freshwater Bay, which used to be a nice bathing beach, but is now covered with seaweed. The National Trust has purchased a farmer's field next to the cliffs, so now, instead of a steep climb close to the side of the cliff, we can walk across the wide field to a gate to get on to Tennyson Down. Despite the strong wind, I could still hear the skylarks singing, and saw them flying high above.

From the high points of these cliffs, one sees the splendid views of both the IOW and the mainland coast with the Fawley oil refinery, and Hurst castle, in the distance. At the peak is the monument to Tennyson. The inscription reads:

IN MEMORY OF ALFRED LORD TENNYSON THIS CROSS IS RAISED A BEACON TO SAILORS BY THE PEOPLE OF FRESHWATER & OTHER FRIENDS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

and a plaque with it, which was put up recently:

*...Take it and come to the Isle of Wight:
Where, far from the noise of smoke and town,
I watch the twilight falling brown All around
a careless ordered garden, Close to the ridge
of a noble down.*

The wind abated on the path down to Totland Bay and we noticed bright pink pyramidal orchids, the national flower of the island, lining our way. Nearer the bay we passed a wedding at an RC church, a pub, and two guesthouses which are now closed.

When we arrived at the closed café in front of the pier, we saw the landslide into the sea, which had destroyed the coastal path to Colwell Bay in December 2012. Windy Totland looked like a "ghost resort" - no holiday-makers, no coastal path, thronged with locals, holiday-makers and ramblers; it's now fenced off with a large notice, "Footpath closed- Do not Enter".

Totland council will spend £200,000 on a "make do and mend" option to prevent further damage to the wall which will be finished at the end of September this year. A new pedestrian route between Totland and Colwell Bays will open. Natural England has approved the scheme: "It is not a full repair though, but will minimise further damage. This is the most realistic option given the council's severe financial constraints".

It will be a great improvement on the present coastal path, which is narrow and little more than a tree-lined passage. We crossed Colwell beach - metal steps missing - and continued onwards through the wood, and back to Yarmouth.

We hope to lead another walk like this next summer. Hope you will come!

Helen & Barry Burlingham