



OXFORD FIELDPATHS SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Issue 22: September 2016

From the Chairman

Two important events took place in the year 1926:

- April 21st saw the birth of Elizabeth Alexandra Mary, Princess of York, who as a result of the abdication of her uncle became our Queen.
- And on January 26th 70 people gathered at Oriol College to discuss the spread of the City of Oxford into the countryside. They were deeply concerned that creeping urbanisation was destroying the footpaths and bridleways; what is more, farmers were blocking up these rights of way on the grounds that they were no longer being used.

The notice advertising the meeting read thus:

'Unless something is done to protect these (rights of way), many of them will fall out of use and be forgotten. The ordinary road has more and more become either dangerous or disagreeable for the pedestrian, hence the preservation of the footpaths and bridlepaths is more necessary than ever. The latter are generally safer, quieter and pleasanter than modern roads and bring one into much closer touch with the real country'. (As true today as it was then.)

On that auspicious day it was agreed to form **'The Society for the Preservation of Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons in the neighbourhood of Oxford.'** Although the Society changed its name to the Oxford Fieldpaths Society it has remained true to its founding vision, continuing to walk and to keep open all Public Rights of Way, not only in the vicinity of the city but throughout the whole of the county of Oxfordshire.

A founding member was a certain **Wytton Perowne d'Arcy Dalton**. As Honorary Assistant Secretary he came up with the idea of producing a map, centred on Oxford, to show all the paths (covering an area of 144 square miles), which the Society considered to be Public rights of Way. He masterminded the entire project, overseeing publication in 1933 of an initial print-run of 1000 copies. These quickly sold out and 1935 saw a reprint of a further 1000 copies. After the Second World War, d'Arcy, by then Secretary of the Society, was present at every one of the many hearings called by the County Council to hear objections by landowners to proposals made by the Society to list paths as legally-protected Public Rights of Way. At over 130 of these hearings d'Arcy was successful in ensuring the legal definition of these paths as Public rights of Way.

In 1959 d'Arcy became Chairman of the Society and then President in 1977. I am delighted to record that

the Oxford Blue Plaque Board has agreed to a recommendation made by the Society that a Blue Plaque should be erected to the memory of d'Arcy Dalton, a true 'Defender and Champion of Oxfordshire Public Rights of Way'. For many years the d'Arcy Dalton family lived at 'Wyverns' in Great Milton. A footpath passes in front of the house so it is fitting that any walker using it will see our Blue Plaque and be reminded of his name and the tremendous contribution he made to the preservation of so many footpaths throughout the county.

This year, as part of its continuing programme to make the path network more accessible to all, the Society has funded the replacing of stiles with gates, each one bearing the Society's commemorative plaque. You can find our gates at Lyneham and Churchill on the d'Arcy Dalton Way, at Garsington on the Green Belt Way, and at Chastleton on the Cotswold Way link.

[Anne Partridge affixes the OFS plaque on a new kissing gate on the d'Arcy Dalton Way at Lyneham](#)



Photo: Jim Parke

By the time you read this article I hope you will all have enjoyed the events organised for this celebratory year. Thanks to the initiative of Adam Willett and Margaret Jones, the whole 66 mile length of the long-distance recreational walk, the d'Arcy Dalton Way, will have been traversed over the May and the August Bank Holidays. Our 90th Birthday Dinner will have taken place on June 17th at the Oxford Golf Club, and two 90th Birthday walks and a celebratory afternoon tea at Checkendon in September. Our grateful thanks go to Sue Crisp and Alison Broadbridge for organising these two events.

Chairman – Jim Parke



Jim joined the OFS in 2006 and led his first walk in April 2009. Co-opted onto the Committee at the AGM in 2009, he became Chairman at the AGM in 2012. Also known as Mr. Clippie because he carries a pair of secateurs around to snip away at vegetation growing on paths around stiles, bridges, gates and finger posts.

Dymock Weekend

April 1-3 2016



Photo: Jean Wykes

On April Fool's Day we set off for Queen's Wood Car Park, near Kempsey in Gloucestershire, to rendezvous with ten other members, to explore the Dymock Poets' Way 1 and 2, the Daffodil Walk and the Three Choirs Way.

On the cusp of March into April we had plenty of mad March winds and lots of April showers to challenge us that Friday afternoon. By mid-day on Saturday the sun came out and our spirits rose even when we dozen walkers sought the various way markers, few of which unfortunately, seemed to exist.

The Dymock Poets, John Drinkwater, Edward Thomas, Wilfred Gibson, Rupert Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie, and Robert Frost inspired us as we walked along, and some of our members who loved their poetry recited them to the rest of us. Edward Thomas had written of a pastoral way of life which was beginning to disappear: I wonder how he would react to our 21st century factory farming?

There was much to see in the area; 12th century frescoes in St. Mary's Church in Kempsey, a miniature cathedral of the Arts and Crafts Movement at St. Edwards Church, an excellent permanent exhibition on the Dymock Poets in Dymock Church and the well preserved manor of Preston Court with its Tudor and Georgian facades.

We spent our two nights at the Cotford Hotel, a Gothic Victorian house set in a landscaped garden at the foot of the Malvern Hills. It was built in 1851 as the summer residence for the Bishop of Worcester; this tells you something about the comfort and welcome we received at the hotel. Its second great attraction was its excellent French style cuisine and we would all recommend it to anyone wanting a treat when travelling through the area.



Photo: Jean Wykes

It was a trip down memory lane to see hedges covered in frothy billows of white blossom instead of being flayed back to the trunk; the wood anemones providing a cream carpet between the glorious golden wild daffodils growing in profusion, none of them trampled but respected; the large agricultural complexes and barns still agriculturally used instead of being gentrified for weekend city dwellers.

Coming from urban Oxford, the rural weekend was a very refreshing uplifting experience. Thank you to all who shared their time and knowledge to make it a very memorable weekend, uplifting one's soul. Thank you so much, Eme, for organising, and keeping a gentle nurturing hand on it, so we could all fulfil our different agendas for the weekend.

Jean Wykes

President – Sir Hugo Brunner



After a long career in publishing, Sir Hugo was made the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire in 1996, a role he continued in until 2008. He became the president of the Society in June 2013.

Dymock Days

*Humble to follow the ways of those Dymock poets.
We walked and talked from Queen's Wood to Kempsey.
Across fields of red Gloucestershire mud,
And unmarked pathways to Dymock Church.*

*We walked, we twelve, in early April sun and wind.
Traversing meadows profuse with natural daffodils;
Low of stature, groups and patches,
Bright along the banks and hedge sides.*

*The whirring call of Curlews,
The mew of Buzzards
Winging the air,
Hovering above us.*

*Returning by evening Malvernwards;
To read and talk of those great poets
Whose presence echoed there.*

Janice Ure

Webmaster – Adam Willett



Adam took over as webmaster in 2010. He was co-opted onto the committee being formally elected in 2011. Shortly after this, he took on managing the social

accounts allowing them to be separated from the main Society accounts.

Bluebells and Bottlenecks 2016



Photo: Liz Adams

All leaders make a concerted effort to arrive well before the official start time to ensure a quick check through of details of the walk and boots on and ready to go, but even the best laid plans can unravel, especially this year, with the roadworks around Oxford.

However, no-one expected that there would be difficulties in getting to the Bluebell walk in Nettlebed this year as most of us would avoid the bottlenecks on the ring road. Cabling work along the A4074 near Shillingford roundabout caused chaos, huge queues in each direction, with lights on the roundabout in a four way sequence, letting few cars through on each change.

This resulted in the walk starting half an hour late but those who made the effort to remain patient in the queue were rewarded with a lovely walk, beautiful vistas of bluebells making the floors of the beech woods a carpet of colour and wonderful scent in the air.

Stopping for lunch



Photo: Liz Adams

Two weeks later there was no sign of the road works and everyone arrived on time for the walk around Sonning and Shiplake.

Liz Adams

Committee member – John Eyre



John joined the OFS in 1992 and led his first walk in June 1993. He was voted onto the Committee at the AGM in 1999; audited the annual accounts for 1999; became Treasurer in 2000 and continued in this post until 2012 when he became an ordinary member of the Committee.

Publicity – Janice Ure



I help with publicity; See my design for a car window sticker to help to publicise O.F.S and to help with recruitment.



Publicity – Margaret Jones



Margaret is in charge of publicity for the Society. She organises our attendance at shows and publicises our walks in local newspapers.

New System for Reporting Path Problems

Members will know that, for some years, it has been possible to report problems on paths to the Countryside Access Team by using an on-line procedure. This method uses an interactive countryside access map which shows all the Public Rights of Way. It is possible to zoom down onto a particular path and identify the precise location of the problem and the number of the path. Once the location of the problem has been found and the grid reference noted, (to the nearest square metre), a written description of the nature of the problem is typed in a box. This is then automatically emailed to the County Council's Countryside Access Team, who will enter the problem onto the Team's database.

Introduced in March 2016, the new procedure is very similar but has two major improvements:

The first is that the interactive map shows details of the path infrastructure, i.e.,

gates, stiles, bridges, steps and fingerposts. Because many reported problems are related to these structures, it is particularly useful to be able to pinpoint the exact location of, and to comment upon, the structure in question.

Secondly, previously, whereas the information had to be inputted manually, the description of the problem is directly transferred electronically into the Countryside Access Team's database (after being checked by the relevant Field Officer). As a result there is a considerable saving of officer time in handling and processing the information.

When using the procedure for the first time it is necessary for the individual to set up an account, giving an email address and a password. This is so that an automatic response can be sent from the Access Team to the reporter, and for the latter to receive updates on how the reported problem is being dealt with. The 'report a path problem' website address is

<https://camsv.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

It is suggested that you bookmark this address, or add it to favourites, in your list of websites. I also have an electronic copy of a Guide to Using the CAMSweb which I will send to any member who emails me. jmh.parke@btinternet.com

Finally, it would be helpful, when the problem is being typed into the relevant box, if you would indicate that you are a member of the O.F.S and/or a Parish Path Warden.

[Jim Parke](#)

Minutes Secretary – Sue Crisp



Sue has been an O.F.S member for about 20 years and a Committee member for nearly as long. She was Walks Organiser for 10 years, and also planned and led many of the group

residential trips. She took over as minutes secretary when Jim became chairman but still arranges some social events, like the annual golf club dinner, and leads walks.

Treasurer – Mike Wykes



Mike is a fusion energy consultant and as treasurer of OFS, he ensures the smooth financial operation of the Society and energetically keeps the accounts in good order!

Diversions, etc

I have objected, again, to the order on Churchill FP4, which was re-issued in its original form with the typo sending the diversion into Cuxham uncorrected. The quality of their diversion maps, when related to the planning applications, remains abysmal (this is partly due to the quality of the developers' site plans as well).

The claim for Islip FP18 to the sports field, originally set up by Janice Ure's father in the 1950s, has been confirmed.

Other Matters

The legislation relating to claims for rights of way that are not yet on the Definitive Map is set to change. The details were set out in last year's Newsletter, but the change is not yet in force because the regulations have (as I write) not yet been agreed; we are expecting these to come into force soon. 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.

And if you were wondering how a well-known hazard came into being ...

1. And the trees of the forest did contend before the Lord, to become king of the forest, and the bramble said unto the Lord, "I shall be king of the forest".
2. And the Lord said unto the bramble, "Go forth and multiply".
3. And the bramble went forth and multiplied, so that all the trees complained to the Lord, as there was no room for them to grow; and the bramble said, "I shall be king of the forest".
4. And the Lord said to the bramble, "Get knotted".

5. And the bramble got tangled and ravelled and twined, until no thing could pass through; but however hard he strove there was no way in which he could get knotted.
6. And the Lord said to the bramble, "Because you have not obeyed my commandment, and have become ravelled, and tangled, and twined, but not knotted,
7. You will forever be twined, and ravelled, and tangled; and you shall grow low to then ground, and a hindrance and nuisance to all who try to pass by; and all the trees of the forest shall rule over you".
8. And so it came to pass, that all the trees of the forest grow taller than the bramble, through which nobody can pass because it is tangled, and twined, and ravelled; but never knotted to this day.

David Godfrey

General Secretary – David Godfrey



David is the general secretary for the Society, preparing the annual report. He is also Cherwell District Secretary and keeps track of the many diversions and footpath problems across the county as well as representing the Society at many meetings such as the Rights of Way Monitoring Group.

District Secretary – Nick Moon



Nick Moon first joined OFS in 1973 when he was a student and volunteered to assist Peter Johns in surveying paths in South Oxfordshire. He continued in that role, despite being out of the country for 9 months of the year from 1980 onwards, later joining the Committee and taking over from Peter as District Secretary when he retired. Since Derek Hallam died, he has also been acting as caretaker for Oxford City.

Newsletter Editor – Lesley Fraser



My brief is to collect and collate your contributions to the newsletter.

Submission to the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Scheme

Col. Wytton Perowne d'Arcy Dalton (1893 – 1981)

Two very important contributions were made by d'Arcy Dalton toward the preservation and enhancement of Oxfordshire's Public Rights of Way network. Firstly, in 1933 he was responsible for the production of a map (reprinted in 1935), showing in clear detail those footpaths and bridle paths which the then Oxford and District Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Society deemed to be public rights of way. Secondly, he worked tirelessly throughout the period 1949 – 1958 to ensure that as many P[ublic] R[ights] o[f] W[ay] as possible received legal protection through being included on the Definitive Map and listed on the Definitive Statement.

The inter-war years saw a rapid decline in the public use of footpaths and bridle paths and there was grave concern that if this process continued large sections of the network would be lost for ever. The Oxford and District Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Society thus came into being in 1926. Its primary aim was the organisation of a programme of regular walks, coupled with the determination to challenge any attempt by farmers and landowners to obstruct or close off any of the footpaths.

The Society numbered some of the great and the good of Oxford and its environs among its officers, but the real work was done by the Secretary F. C. Roby, and especially by d'Arcy Dalton as Assistant Secretary. They were assiduous in following up any reports that came to their notice of paths that were in danger. It was d'Arcy Dalton who had the idea of

producing a map, at a suitable scale of 2 miles to the inch and covering some 144 square mile in area, centred on the City of Oxford, which would show all those footpaths which the Society deemed to be P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay]s. It took two years to compile because d'Arcy Dalton, assisted by 2 fellow committee members, needed to check the route of every path that was to be shown on the map before it was printed by the Ordnance Survey. The first edition, published in 1933, ran to 1,000 copies. It quickly sold out and a reprint of a further 1,000 followed in 1935.

The Oxford Society was the fourth local society of the National Association of Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Societies to publish such a map, the others being North Wirral, Middlesex and Buckinghamshire (Barnet area), and Watford. Cambridge followed in 1935. This map was of great significance as, by highlighting in red those paths deemed to be P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay]s, it emphasised the P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay] network.

The rapid sale of the first print run demonstrated the interest of the general public and gave a tremendous boost in publicity to the work of the Society. Upon the death of Roby in May 1940 d'Arcy Dalton was elected Secretary. Later, d'Arcy Dalton being on war service, the affairs of the Society were handled by a Mr G.A Bennett. Immediately after the war ended d'Arcy Dalton returned as Secretary and in 1945 oversaw the production and publication of a further edition of the P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay] map. This edition too was very well received.

However, d'Arcy Dalton's greatest contribution to Oxfordshire's P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay] network came about in the post-war period following the 1949 legislation of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This Act imposed on County Councils the obligation to prepare in three stages, Draft, Provisional and Definitive, Maps showing all those footpaths which needed to be registered as P[ro]tected R[ights] o[f] W[ay]s. The two County Councils of

Oxfordshire and Berkshire devolved to each parish council the responsibility for identifying, and listing in detail, all the PRoWs in its area.

This process started in 1950 and took up all of d'Arcy Dalton's time. As Secretary of the Society he took a lead in assisting any parish councils who requested help in compiling the lists of PRoWs. The Society's pre-war map proved to be of inestimable value in identifying every path in those parishes shown on it which was considered to be a PRoW. In June 1953 Oxfordshire published its Draft Map. The County Council received objections - mainly from farmers and landowners - in respect of 497 paths. The Society itself claimed 135 paths which had been excluded by the County Council from its Draft Map.

During the years 1954, 1955 and 1956 d'Arcy Dalton attended full-day hearings dealing with over 130 paths at various parish centres, including some of those claimed by the Society. This involved a great deal of research, for in every disputed case d'Arcy Dalton needed to prove the validity of the Society's claim. This was often found in the records of enclosure awards. Further evidence came from interviewing possible witnesses who could claim many years usage of the disputed paths. Apart from those settled at the hearings, the Society was successful in 57 contested cases of paths, failing in 12.

Some notable successes were in respect of the entire Thames towpath from Henley to Oxford, the Pinkhill Farm and Lock path, the Wick Farm bridleway and the bridleway from Great Milton to Haseley. The survey started later in North Berkshire where hearings on the Draft Map were not held until 1957-8. D'Arcy Dalton again attended 8 of these, not only claiming 25 paths in Abingdon Rural District on behalf of the Society, but also contesting owners' objections. As a result many paths were saved, especially within the parishes of Cumnor and Wootton

(including Boars Hill) and in Wallingford town.

D'Arcy Dalton, having joined the Footpaths Society as one of its founding members in 1926, continued as member for 55 years until his death in 1981. He became Chairman in 1959 and in 1977 President of the Society. In 1986 a long-distance (60+ miles) way across the Oxfordshire Cotswolds from Wormleighton (Warks.) to The Ridgeway at Wayland's Smithy was named in his honour. He was also a member of the executive committee of both the CPRE (which stood for Council for the Preservation of Rural England at that time) and the Oxford Preservation Trust, and it was with his help that the Oxford Area Youth Hostels Association was established.

Thus d'Arcy Dalton was instrumental in saving many miles of PRoWs which otherwise would have been lost to the successive generations of Oxfordshire walkers and horse riders who use and enjoy them today, and will continue to do so in the years to come. For all his squirearchical name and military background, he was a real man of the people. His great legacy is as the indefatigable, fearless champion and defender of Oxfordshire's rights of way, and it for this that the Oxford Fieldpaths Society would like to nominate him for a Blue Plaque. For many years he lived at 'Wyverns' (now called 'The Limes') in Great Milton, OX44 7NJ.

[Jim Parke](#)

Membership Secretary – Gwyneth Tyson



Gwyneth is in charge of keeping track of the Society's membership, in particular collating all the subscription payments.

Garsington Plaque Walk

On June 22, as part of the Summer Programme, the Society organised an evening walk to attach plaques on four new kissing gates situated on the Oxford Green Belt Way in the Parish of Garsington.

The plaques record the financial contribution of just over £1000 towards their purchase and installation. The four gates have replaced stiles along a half-mile stretch of the Oxford Green Belt Way. The donation was part of the on-going policy of the Society, under its donate-a-gate scheme, to replace stiles with gates, particularly on the important recreational long-distance footpaths in the County. This year has seen similar schemes on the d'Arcy Dalton way at Churchill and Lyneham, and also the Cotswold Link path at Chastleton.

Arthur McEwan-James, Tina Everett and Jim Parke



Photo: Liz Adams

The Garsington plaques walk started in Grenoble Road. We were pleased to welcome to the walk Arthur McEwan-James, County Field Officer South-West, whose area of responsibility includes Garsington. Arthur has given valuable technical assistance and advice on the type of gates and details of approved installation contractors. Another guest walker was Gordon Garraway, Footpath Officer of the Council for the Protection of Rural England. It was the CPRE who created the fifty mile OGBW around Oxford.

In glorious evening sunshine, the group used various footpaths and bridleways to reach the first gate on the OGBW at its junction with Oxford Road in the village of Garsington. There we were met by Tina

Everett, the Parish Path Warden of Garsington, who has acted as the project manager of the scheme.

Also we were pleased to see there Mavis Cornes, a Society member who lives in Garsington.

Michael Payton and John Eyre affixing a plaque at a Garsington gate



Photo: Jim Parke

The commemorative plaque was fixed to the first gate and from here the group continued downhill from the village along the OGBW, affixing plaques on the other three new kissing gates. Still in pleasant evening sunshine the group returned to Grenoble Road via the Roman Road bridleway.

The installation of the gates was carried out by Buryhook Countryside Management. In addition to funding from the Society, the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE2) made a financial contribution with funds from Grundon Waste Management.

Garsington village also has a volunteer stile group who assisted in clearing away the vegetation prior to the gates' installation.

Jim Parke

Walks Organiser – Liz Adams



After 20 years of living in Australia OFS has given me the chance to reacquaint myself with the beauty of the local countryside. I am always very happy to help members who would like to lead a walk. I am hoping that you will be able, in return, to give me a couple of walks for the next Programme.