

OxClean, Spring Clean 2008

One man's efforts to clean up the Sydney harbour area, in 1989, ultimately evolved into an annual event across the country, 'Clean up Australia Day', with lasting benefits to all. Inspired by this, and keenly aware of the strength of feeling amongst our members on how messy Oxford is, we set out to do something here, at home.

Our aim was to involve a wide variety of local groups, organisations and residents in a three-fold, city-wide action plan covering a three-day weekend (Friday 14th to Sunday 16th March, incl). Working together, we hoped to:

- clean up as much of Oxford's litter as possible in the course of a weekend, using volunteers;
- draw attention to the problem and its causes;
- start to change people's behaviour whilst improving the provision of disposal units.

The response was fantastic – over 100 groups, more than 1,500 volunteers, had fun litter-picking!



City Works is making an immediate and detailed analysis of all materials collected. We eagerly await their statistics.



On Friday 29 February, St Gregory the Great Catholic Secondary School in Cricket Road, Cowley was the venue for the official launch of **OxClean/Spring Clean 2008**. Their students took part in a ceremony attended by the Lord Mayor of Oxford Councillor John Tanner, the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire Hugo Brunner, City Councillors and officers, invited guests, fellow students and staff.



represents a vitally important resource. We are determined to learn everything we can from that.

Next steps

We have made it as easy as possible for every participating group to give us their feedback on all aspects of the project. We ask 3 fundamental questions of everyone, as indicated here. We await their response, and any other comments, with interest. We plan a major **Debrief Seminar** event in the Town Hall early in April to which every participant and active supporter has been invited.

In this way, we plan to capture initial thoughts and comments from everyone involved. We will study these carefully, before compiling a detailed report for the careful consideration of our Executive Committee.

Once we have done this, we undertake to:

- 1) report back, in detail, to our membership in the July issue of the newsletter;
- 2) press for 'change' in the practice of creating litter & the provision for its disposal;
- 3) endeavour to ensure that **OxClean** is a regular calendar event in the future.

Please let us know your views on the creation and disposal of litter, or any related topic. Visit oxclean@oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk for news of further developments.

*What has Spring Clean 2008 achieved?
How to prepare for future Spring Cleans?
What should be done to help keep the city clean all year round?*

Whose idea was OxClean?

First mooted by **Rosanne Bostock**, OCS Environment Group member and tireless Anti-litter campaigner, **OxClean/Spring Clean 2008** was then adopted in November 2007 with great enthusiasm and some trepidation by a small Steering Group: **Rosanne, Vernon Porter** (*Hon Sec*), **Liz Storrar** (*Environment Group member and our Team Chair*), **Ros Weatherall** (*Convenor, Environment Group*) and **Communications Group**: Liz Grosvenor (*Membership Sec*), Pauline Martin (*Newsletter*), and Christine Thompson (*Media & Publicity*).

The **OxClean Team** liaised closely with your Executive Committee, who offered their encouragement, support and help at all stages of the project.

What has been gained?

Primarily, an unprecedented level of engagement and collaboration with local amenities and services, businesses, colleges and schools, individuals and residents' associations, church groups and youth groups. Just as important, there is now a shared and evolving agenda for 'change' in terms of a cleaner, more attractive city for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.

Has anything new been learned?

The recent experience of everyone who participated in the event, as well as all those who helped, supported and encouraged it,

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The Chairman comments:

This edition of the Newsletter marks some important developments for the Society.

We record here the proceedings of the AGM for the first time in its revised presentation, in which we have circulated all our formal reports and Annual Accounts to members in advance, thus allowing time and opportunity at the meeting for questions and discussion. Accordingly, the Newsletter can devote coverage to other pressing matters.

Foremost of these, of course, has been our major initiative in so successfully launching the OxClean programme through the magnificent achievements of Spring Clean weekend, reported here. The thanks of us all are due to the organising committee and our partners, Oxford City Council and The Oxford Times. With over one hundred participating groups, the challenges faced have been huge, but the response has been most rewarding.

Taking direct responsibility for the improvement of our environment in this way is clearly close to the heart of the whole community, and we hope this widespread engagement will continue to grow, so that further development of the OxClean campaign will make a permanent difference to the appearance of the city overall – and the generators of so much of the litter we all have to remove may modify their habits.

OxClean however is only one way in which the committee and members have been focussing new-found energy. Our recently published booklet "The Bus Stops Here" is already widely welcomed, and will we trust contribute to a major improvement in the comfort and efficiency of travel within the city. Paul Cullen's recent talk 'A New Oxford Transport Strategy?' and his follow-up article on pages 4-5 will, we believe, stimulate further endeavours towards meeting present and looming challenges.

There are some exciting times ahead!

Tony Joyce

Annual General Meeting Saturday 8 March 2008, 2 pm St Aldates Parish Centre

The Society's formal event of the year was preceded by a fascinating and thought-provoking talk by **Stephen Pryor** a volunteer representative for **Citizens' Advice Bureau**. He outlined something of the work of this unique organisation and its three-fold remit of (i) answering clients' questions, (ii) seeking answers where none is readily available, and (iii) giving feedback to Government on questions asked of them. With more than 40 years' experience as a prison officer before he retired, Stephen was particularly well placed to describe the highly successful working association that CAB sustains, nationally, with H M Prison Service. His attentive and very responsive audience learned a great deal.

A total of 75 Society members and Executive Committee attended the formal AGM where, it was widely felt, the pre-circulation of all relevant reports and papers was of real benefit both to the attenders and, hopefully, the membership as a whole who shared the same level of detailed reporting of information. Certainly, the Agenda was smoothly addressed, with all reports accepted and the Officers and members of Committee, as proposed, duly elected.

The process allowed valuable time for questions and answers from the floor covering, amongst other things: the University's appeal for its Bodleian Library Book Depository and the Society's role in preparing for that; the development of the Radcliffe Infirmary site; the question of email circulation of materials, not just hard copy, on request; and the possible appointment of a paid, part-time administrative assistant.

As usual, the afternoon closed with the serving of a delicious home-made tea to everyone who chose to stay, providing an ongoing and welcome opportunity for lively discussion amongst the tables.

Blue Plaques

The power of images emerges as the theme of recent plaques unveiled in Oxford. In May 2007 we acknowledged the importance of magnetic resonance imaging when we commemorated the manufacture of the first **MRI scanner** by Oxford Instruments in 1980 at what is now the King's Centre, OsneyMead.

In July **Paul Nash** was honoured at 106 Banbury Road where he lived 1940-46. He was employed as an official war artist and took his inspiration for the painting *Totes Meer* from the sea of wrecked German planes at the Cowley dump.

The Pre-Raphaelites were in the frame again in October when we erected a plaque to **Jane Burden**, wife of William Morris and muse of Rossetti, in the still atmospheric St Helen's Passage, where she was born in 1839.

A photograph taken by **Henry Taunt** in 1908 shows the dwellings still extant in St Helen's Passage. He left an incomparable photographic record of Victorian and Edwardian Oxford and the Thames Valley. In January we finally realised our ambition of erecting a plaque on his house and workshop at 393 Cowley Road. The unveiling was especially celebratory as the future of the house had been very uncertain.

In the remote hamlet of Fulwell in June a plaque was erected for **Mont Abbott** whose recollections of a life spent on the land around Enstone were recorded by Sheila Stewart in *Lifting the Latch*.

At Filkins in July **Sir Stafford Cripps** was honoured as a significant national figure and outstanding local benefactor.

*Eda Forbes, Secretary,
Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board*

Notes: (1) See the viewfinder website of English Heritage for a collection of fascinating **Henry Taunt** images, including St Helen's Passage, 1908. (2) The Society's website has a section dedicated to **Blue Plaques**, offering access to detailed information **(Editor)**

Street Numbering in Oxford

'Sat Nav' may have changed life for many who can get to their destination by car, and it enables the efficient delivery of online shopping. But for the bewildered pedestrian in many Oxford streets the numbering, instigated in the early 1840's at the time of the introduction of Penny Post, still endures.

Writing in *Newsletter No. 93 (November 2002)*, Stephanie Jenkins's article explains how this happened and gives a useful list of those streets where the deceptive numbering remains.

Stephanie writes:

"... The numbering started with 1,2,3 etc at the main junction of the street, continued to the end of the first side, crossed the road and returned to the main junction again. This means that the lowest and the highest numbers are always opposite each other, so that in Oxford's High Street Lloyds Bank at no. 1 faces the Edinburgh Wool Mill Shop at no. 143.

Numbering continued in this deceptive way until about 1920, so besides the High, other Oxford streets to guard against include Beaumont Street, Broad Street, Cornmarket Street, King Edward Street, Magdalen Street, New Road, Pembroke Street, Queen Street, St. Giles, and Turl Street, as well as most of the streets of the old dense suburbs of East Oxford and Jericho including Walton Street."

I became increasingly aware of this problem myself, whilst working in the Oxfam Bookshop in St Giles where many people call in asking for the location of street numbers. The east side of St Giles numbers from 1 to 30 (south to north): the west side goes from 66 to 31.

Some patience (perhaps) is needed for the bewildered pedestrian who is a stranger to our city.

Christine Butler, Society Archivist

A BID for Oxford!
By the Oxford City Centre
Management Company, OX1

“Arriving in the City Centre, it again looked like the streets had been put through a car wash. Shiny shop windows, clean pavements, empty rubbish bins and the fragrance of summer planting. The OX1 cleaning team were busy jet-washing Queen Street in preparation for this weekend’s ‘pedestrian day extravaganza’. Another traditional shop front was being installed: ‘Grant-funding provided by OX1’, the contractor’s board proclaimed proudly, and members of the OX1 BID company ‘street team’ are easily visible in their red jackets.”

This is a snapshot of the vision that OX1 has for the future. It is why we are campaigning to transform Oxford City Centre into a Business Improvement District (BID).

We are committed to making central Oxford a better place for everyone who works, visits, studies or lives here. We want Oxford to have a cleaner, safer, more pleasant environment in which to do business. We aim to promote the commercial heart of Oxford as a place where people choose to come and stay longer.

This is a new way forward for those willing to invest in a future for the City, which is fairer, more transparent, and brings choice and decision-making to a local level.

BIDs already operate in more than 65 cities and towns across the UK, but the proposal for Oxford City Centre would make it one of the biggest in the country, involving more than 800 businesses. It would also be unique because of the mix of commercial business, retail and colleges involved in the proposed BID area.

Revenue of almost £1m per year would be raised from a levy on business rates in the agreed area. This extra funding would be used to deliver on the agreed priorities of those businesses. To win the vote, which takes place in June and July, OX1 needs a ‘double majority’, that is a majority of businesses must vote in favour, and those in fa-

your must account for more than 50% of the total rateable value of those voting.

The BID business plan, on which businesses will be asked to vote, will be available from OX1 mid-May. Meanwhile, please visit our website, www.ox1.uk.com for information, or to contact us.

Alison Nicholson
OX1 Communications Manager

The City in the Evening

By day, Oxford city centre is busy with residents and visitors going about their business. Much of this activity ceases between 5 and 6 pm, not starting up again until the following day. For some, the city in the evening is seen as closed and unwelcoming, difficult to access, dominated by anti-social, often alcohol fuelled behaviour. Much of this is perception rather than reality, but perception is reality in many minds.

This Society is one of 750 members of a national organisation called **The Civic Trust**, which has been running a research project called ‘**Night Vision**’ for a number of years. This has resulted in a very clear ‘vision’ for what town centres should be at night as welcoming spaces for everyone – families, residents, businesses, older people, teenagers etc. The vision includes: shops open in the evening; venues that cater for families and older customers; special events that add life to the town centre; innovative use of public buildings; an increase in non alcohol related activities; improved public spaces and lighting; better night time public transport; an evident and responsible adult presence such as street wardens. See www.civictrust.org.uk/evening/index.html for further details.

The redevelopment of Westgate and the West End creates opportunities to develop Oxford along these lines. Should Oxford seize that opportunity? Let us know what you think.

Vernon Porter, Hon Secretary

Report from the Planning Sub-Committee

Update on applications mentioned in the November newsletter – the following applications have been refused:- flats at **Jericho Canal-side**; awnings over windows of **The Mitre Hotel on the High Street**; a house to rear of **21 Wolvercote Green** (second application to be refused); demolition of **190 Iffley Road** (third application to be refused); extensive alterations to **12 Linton Road**; a tall pair of semi-detached houses at **45 Davenant Road**; and a small house to rear of **113 – 117 Old Road**. Still undecided is the application for student accommodation at **61 St Aldates**.

Permission was given for roof alterations at **41 Fern Hill Road, Lye Valley**, despite the restricted head-room.

Summaries follow of a selection of the 38 letters of comments written since October:- In November 2007 there was an application to demolish the **Lemon Tree Restaurant at 268 Woodstock Road**, and put up a rear block of 6 flats on 3 and 4 storeys, with two tall town houses at the front, and basement parking; this was refused permission in December. Demolition of **91 Lime Walk** was proposed, with replacement by a block of 4 flats and a terrace of two 3-bed houses and 2 flats. At **4 Jack Straw’s Lane** demolition and replacement of the house was proposed, (and later permitted). Behind **274 and 276 Woodstock Road**, it was proposed to build two large 4-storey blocks for 9 flats but this was refused in January, as was a revised version in March. At nos. **10 - 12 Stephen Road, Headington**, 4 houses and 5 flats were proposed: this plan was withdrawn but has just reappeared with modifications.

In *December* at **59 – 63 Cowley Road**, it was proposed to demolish frontage buildings and replace by a 4-storey building for 2 shops and 6 flats, retaining a rear workshop and providing a courtyard garden; this was refused as too cramped. Side and rear extensions to **124 Morrell Avenue** were planned for a separate

2-bed house, but in January permission was refused as the accommodation would be small and poorly laid out. Alterations to the front of **14 Bainton Road** were accepted.

January 2008 brought another application for a house to the rear of **21 Wolvercote Green**, (refused in March). **195 Banbury Road, Summertown**, was the subject of a proposal to build a glass front porch, out of keeping with this attractive terrace building; this was withdrawn a month later. Alterations to the roof of **105 Fern Hill Road, Lye Valley**, were proposed (and permitted in February despite a resulting windowless bedroom and low-ceilinged loft-room). At **St Antony’s College, Woodstock Road**, plans for the **Middle Eastern Studies new Library** included upper floors within a 30m long fibre-glass trumpet, its ends attached to houses in Woodstock Road, the southern end rising to the eaves of No. 66 and containing a huge window. At **Iffley Road Oxford University Sports Ground** a three-court Indoor Tennis Centre was proposed, much like an airport hangar, prominently positioned behind new railings replacing the fence along Iffley Road.

February 2008 applications included one for large blocks of flats at **274 – 276 Woodstock Road**, refused in March, and for a 34-bed guest house at **376 Banbury Road**, now permitted

Gillian Argyle, Mark Barrington-Ward, Kate Joyce, Chris Rayson, David Townsend

Notes:

1) The full list of the Planning Sub Committee’s monthly comments on applications, in summary form, can be viewed on the home page of our website, which is regularly updated. Go to www.oxfordcivicsoc.org.uk and click on the **Planning Views** button.

2) In addition, the site’s main **Planning** section links directly to the city’s website where a comprehensive history of each application, and all comments received, is published under its relevant reference number. **(Editor)**

Transport Notes

Heathrow Airport's new Terminal 5 will be open at the end of March and from then, the X70 'Airline' coaches to the airport will be taking a different route. Instead of going direct to the Central Bus Station from the M4, they will now use the new junction on the M25 to reach Terminal 5 and then continue to the Central Bus Station for Terminals 1, 2 and 3. The coaches will no longer serve Terminal 4 but train connections will run from the central area every 15 minutes.

Whilst on the subject of airport coaches, congratulations are due to Oxford Bus Company for being named as the 'UK Express Bus Operator of the Year' for the airline service. Congratulations, also, to Stagecoach who were runners up in the same category.

Further praise for the city has come from the Confederation of Passenger Transport for the high quality bus services provided in Oxford, resulting in rising passenger numbers as opposed to decline in other areas.

Oxford residents who already possess a Concessionary Bus Pass will receive the new National Bus Pass automatically by post during March. Those living outside the city will have to contact their local authority by phone or on-line. City residents who become eligible after 1 April can apply as before, at City Chambers in St Aldates.

First Great Western have introduced one day 'Ranger' and 3- or 7-day 'Rover' tickets for an area bounded by Moreton-in-Marsh, Banbury, Bicester Town and Reading. They cost £15 for the day ticket and £40/£70 for the 3- or 7-day tickets, respectively. Children travel half price and the usual Railcard discounts apply.

As the new 'Adshel' bus shelters appear on the streets, you will be able to assess their qualities against the Society's new booklet 'The Bus Stops Here'. We can always press for further improvements!

David Townsend, Transport Secretary

Sustainability and Climate Change in our daily travel

Government has set stringent targets for reducing climate-changing emissions, and household use of cars is one of transport's biggest sources of those emissions. Government has also set four immediate priorities for addressing sustainability, including *Climate change and energy* and *Sustainable communities*.

Government also recognises that *changing behaviour* is a cross cutting theme closely linked to all its sustainability priorities and identifies *well being* as central to the issue of sustainable development.

Within Government's objectives for climate change and energy is the requirement to 'encourage a move towards more environmentally friendly forms of transport'.

How can we in Oxford (and Oxfordshire) help deliver some of the government's sustainability objectives (amongst which, addressing climate change is one)?

1) Bus travel: how can we make cross-city bus travel more attractive, as part of the process of widening choice? And should the County endeavour to ensure over-supply of buses does not occur on some corridors?



Buses in The High

Can traffic levels be reduced so that bus services can perform reliably without resort to bus lanes which use street space inefficiently?

2) Walking and cycling: how can walking and cycling be made more attractive – and actively encouraged – including the important journeys to and from public transport? Do traffic management arrangements need review, in favour of creating a more 'democratic' road environment that not only uses road space more efficiently, allowing users shared rights and responsibilities, but also enables street clutter to be reduced?

3) Car use: can the benefits of the car be extended to the one third of Oxford households who do not have one available, but who might from time to time need one? Could this be achieved by car sharing, car pools, or more car hire, for example? If so, might sufficient travel alternatives be created so that some existing users decide that their car ownership is no longer essential?

4) Our streets as 'places' not just thoroughfares: how can the community re-establish the 'place' functions of a street?



Charles Street is not "a place"

What must the County do to ensure that climate changes (as in violent weather and heavy rainfall) do not fill our gutters and create ponds wherever visually or physically impaired people need to cross the street, so that they cannot go about on foot?

5) Creating alternatives: should there be some limit on the use of the car, to help encourage those journeys that cause most pollution and congestion to be made in other ways? If so, where and how should such limits be applied: to cross-city traffic using the centre, parking spaces at workplaces, on-street parking spaces?

Soon the County will begin developing the next edition of its **Local Transport Plan**, for the period 2011 to 2016. It is expected that sustainability and climate change will feature strongly in the objectives that the Government asks the County to address.

The Society hopes to contribute to the discussions that precede preparation of the Plan. Your views are welcomed – in answer to the above questions, and of course about any other travel related matters that you believe should be raised at this time, eg:

- Must we accept further imposed restrictions on our ability to drive and park?
- Or can we reduce the impact we are having on the climate wholly through personal choice?
- Can we do this without giving up our freedoms?



Traffic queuing in Worcester Street

In conclusion: our travel habits will soon need to change. How should Oxford achieve this, whilst ensuring that the city of the future remains a place that people want to live in and to visit – convenient, attractive and easily accessible?

Paul Cullen, Transport Consultant, former Chairman, Oxford Pedestrians Assn

A note from the Chairman:

Many members will wish to contribute to this debate. We are examining how best to provide a suitable forum, via a structured workshop meeting or day conference perhaps, in addition to a carefully composed questionnaire.

Feedback please!

Tony Joyce