

Spring is definitely in the air, and there's a lot going on in our area! So if you want to know more about solar powered bus stops, Carnival planning, or Goped law, read on. Hope you enjoy it, and if you've got something we should know about for the next issue, please get in touch – **the next copy deadline is 13 June**. All contributions welcome!

Sandy Ruxton (sruxton2004@yahoo.co.uk) and Jo Lyon (lyon.jo@gmail.com).

DRARA latest

The Oxford Times recently reported that residents in Headington, Marston and Wheatley are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of large scale hospital and university development on their neighbourhoods. The main problems are parking, traffic congestion and noise, driven by expansionist building plans and assisted by inappropriate planning legislation. Sound familiar? We have suffered from these problems for years, so DRARA has made contact with other residents' associations with similar concerns. We will be looking at our shared experiences, working to develop further our existing links, and exploring common strategies to address these problems. Contact me if you want to be involved in this – we need your input!

At its last meeting, the DRARA committee decided to revert to the traditional autumn membership drive. It will take place immediately after the September AGM and we're looking for some new collectors to help those stalwarts who have been happy to 'doorstep' their neighbours over the years. It's a great opportunity to meet other people in your street if you're feeling sociable, want to get out in the fresh autumn air, and help DRARA at the same time.

With the retirement of Robert Currie, the Committee needs new members to keep an eye on planning applications and to be the point of contact with the Planning Department, and to represent DRARA at the East Area Parliament meetings each month. If you are able to help with any of the above activities, do contact me (see contacts box). *Mark Norman*.

Sinnet Court update

Parking continues to be the biggest issue for local residents during term time. Cherwell caught 12 Sinnet Court residents parking cars in the area last term, and have caught a further two so far this year.

Cherwell's parking procedure is as follows:-

- They carry out twice daily patrols of Southfield, Divinity, Warneford and Minster Roads.
- Suspect cars are detailed with a notice asking the driver to contact the office.
- If Sinnet Court residents come forward they are given a verbal warning and asked to remove their car ASAP.
- If residents don't come forward the registration is

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www.drara.org.uk



sent to the DVLA via Oxford Brookes. Replies can take up to 4 weeks.

- If ownership is confirmed by the DVLA as being a Sinnet Court resident another warning is given. This would be followed by the commencement of eviction proceedings.

Local residents should report cars they suspect belong to Sinnet Court residents to Amanda Green, Resident Manager, on 202377 or amandagreen@dominionhg.co.uk

Management. Last summer, Cherwell was refused permission to change the planning condition requiring Oxford Brookes to have an on-site representative at Sinnet Court. Cherwell have appealed against this decision and the Appeal Hearing is on the 16th August. Please make sure that any problems with Sinnet Court are documented and copies sent to Councillor Simmons (see contacts box) so that they can be considered at the Appeal. *Judith FitzGerald*

Oxford Brookes liaison

On 27 January the Oxford Licensing subcommittee voted to reinstate Oxford Brookes's late bar licences – until 2am on Mondays and Wednesdays – despite many registered complaints from residents. I have continued to log all complaints about noise and parked cars (those that may belong to Sinnet Court students) and have regular contact with Anne Ashley about this. Based on the number of complaints I've had, my impression is that late night noise has reduced this term. On behalf of DRARA I shall also be attending a meeting between Brookes and local Residents Associations, to be held at Brookes on 18 April. Please e-mail me if there is anything you wish to put on the agenda. In order to have complaints on record please e-mail or ring Anne Ashley, Brookes Community link, and Alex Solaja, Environmental Health (see contacts box). Contact me at barbara.crossley@cancer.org.uk or on 434088. *Barbara Crossley*

Local developments

The Cowley Road Improvement Scheme, still on schedule to start in early April, has had to be

modified slightly to meet cost constraints. Of the 23 side streets, all were planned to have crossings (known as continuous pavements). As a result of costs savings, only 16 (the most critical) will be included in the first phase of the scheme. Although regrettable, this is not a major loss. The scheme will still deliver the other major elements: 20 mph limits over much of the Cowley Road – with vehicle activated signs; 3 large 'special areas' of new paving; 16 side road crossings; designated parking and loading bays; over 40 trees; 100 new cycle parking spaces; and 13 new benches. Disruption to traffic on the Cowley Road during the scheme build is unfortunately inevitable. Subsidence at the Plain end of the road will mean digging down almost a metre! Officers have been working hard on a schedule to minimise delays.

Local Councillors are also working with the City Council on providing new bins to stop the accumulation of bin bags and boxes on the pavements (space for these has been designed into the new scheme) and are exploring how best to regulate use of the pavement space for shop displays and outdoor seating.

The main outstanding issues – that we and colleagues on the East Area Parliament (EAP) have repeatedly raised with the County Council – are the variation in speed limits at the boundaries of the scheme and the lack of progress on improvements to The Plain. At the moment, the County's reluctance to extend the planned 20 mph zone means that, although the central stretch of Cowley Road will be 20 mph, the side streets and lower end of the road and The Plain will remain at 30 mph! Clearly, allowing vehicles to speed up on entering a side street is absurd and we will keep pushing for the 20 mph zone to be expanded. On improving safety at The Plain, a scheme has now been drawn up and consultation is being undertaken (it is currently intended to come to the EAP for comment on 18th May). *Councillor Craig Simmons*

On the streets

Trees: the tree pits in Southfield and Divinity Roads have been replanted, and tree guards will be supplied by the County Council.

Street cleaning: DRARA has written to David Walker, the Area Manager at City Works Department, to express concern over the lack of regular street sweeping and litter picking in the area. The EAP is conducting a review of street cleaning schedules, and in advance of this, a one-off 'deep clean' (with machines) of local streets has begun. Residents are reminded that the Council has powers to remove cars parked in the areas designated for cleaning. Litter picking and refuse removal can be requested by calling 0800 783 1957. Persistence may be required, but eventually it gets done!

Let signs: Fed up with lingering 'Let' signs? If they don't go after two weeks, email ptownsend@oxford.gov.uk with details. *Louise Tod*

Traffic: The HAMATS/East Oxford Interface study into the traffic problems in local streets provides for a series of measures, some to be implemented in the short-term (defined as 2004/05-2005/06) and others in the medium-term (defined as 2005/06-2010/11).

The short-term measures comprise restrictions of on-, and off-, street parking in Headington and Marston, and improved bus services. The County Council has recently reported that there has been "no progress due to staff resources", which I charitably take to mean a shortage of these resources! It is planning to "progress parking controls" for Cheney Lane in 2005/06 which, of course, far from making things better in local streets, may make things worse as the drivers of the displaced cars seek parking space here.

The Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) for local streets, apparently the new catchy phrase for Residents Parking Zone (RPZ), has been given a "projected implementation timescale" of mid 2009... Don't hold your breath!

DRARA has not taken a line on CPZs, simply because we have not consulted residents on their views. However, such a scheme would be likely to lead to a big reduction in on-street parking space and thus actually make it more difficult for residents to find a parking space. We have advised the County Council that, for this reason, it is unlikely to be supported by local residents. There are some residents who don't own cars and who might, therefore, support a CPZ, but they are likely to be in a minority. *Peter Coggins*

East Area Parliament

The EAP has funded three new solar-powered park lights to improve illumination in the Manzil Way Play Area. One solar-powered bus stop is also to be trialled on the Cowley Road – again EAP funded. The new plastics recycling banks behind Tescos, introduced on a trial basis by the EAP, are proving very popular. Introduced on 1 February, they are now being emptied once a week. We are, of course, continuing to argue for full Citywide doorstep collection.

In February, a Planning Appeal upheld the EAP decision to refuse the application to build – and create parking – in the back garden of 91 Divinity Road. We felt it set a dangerous precedent and are encouraged (and a not a little relieved – given the potential financial penalty!) that the Inspector supported our view.

The future of the Bingo Hall on Cowley Road is still uncertain: it has recently been listed, which means the structure of the building has to remain much as is. It currently up for sale for £1.5m but the listed status does carry with it potential liabilities.

Councillors Craig Simmons (County), Mary-Jane Sareva (City) and Claire Palmer (City)

In the saddle

Oxfordshire County Council is undertaking a survey of cycling behaviour in the county. Please fill in the survey at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cyclingsurvey – it takes about five minutes, and although Oxford has generated 1,700 responses so far, we're behind Cambridge (who are the control survey group) who've done 2,300! The deadline is 15th April. *Oxford Cycle Workshop* (www.oxfordcycleworkshop.org.uk)

On the beat

St Clements area has a new Police Inspector. Helen Roberts starts at the beginning of April and will be based at Cowley Police station. PC Steve Bowen is moving, but Chris Griffin and David Stares continue to work as Community Police Officers for the area, alongside the bicycle officers – who have received funding from the EAP and local businesses for new bicycles, and will remain focused in East Oxford.

Our crime reduction department are continuing work with the City Council to 'target-harden' houses of multiple occupancy, both social housing and houses owned by private landlords. The burglary rate is still low but is continually monitored. There has been an increase in theft of mopeds and motorcycles.

Residents are encouraged to lock any motorcycle or moped securely to a permanent fixture.

We have also seen one or two of the small 'Goped' scooters in and around Divinity Road. Be aware that if used on the road, the law states they have to be insured and crash helmets have to be worn. Finally, the Neighbourhood Watch signs have been erected and the lighting should be in place. *PC Chris Griffin.*

Local history

Have you ever wanted to know the true story of the Excelsior café? Or wondered what happened to Cowley Road's Congregational Church? These, and many other fascinating nuggets, are contained in Annie Skinner's 'Cowley Road: A Social History', to be published in June by local publisher Signal Books. Based on archival research as well as interviews with many locals, Annie's book focuses on the last half century, tracing Cowley Road's development from a working-class suburb to today's multicultural and student-dominated district.

On the one hand, the author writes, Cowley Road is typical of any British urban street, with changing retail and leisure trends. On the other, it is unique in its political and cultural identity, sitting between industrial Cowley and the university. This has produced not only a tradition of political non-conformism but also a vibrant musical scene, exemplified by Supergrass, Radiohead and the Zodiac. The book will cost £5.99, but is available to readers of the DRARA newsletter at the special price of £5 per copy with free delivery. Cheques (payable to Signal Books) to Signal Books, 36 Minster Road, Oxford OX4 1LY. www.signalbooks.co.uk *Jim Ferguson*

In church

SS Mary & John's Churchyard's Restoration Project is looking for volunteers. Meeting every Wednesday, 6pm-8pm. Also at weekends, from 2pm-4pm on alternating Saturdays and Sundays (Sat 2 Apr, Sun Apr 10, Sat 16 Apr etc.)

For children and families in the parish:

Pre-school: Noah's Ark Eucharist for children and carers every Wednesday at 11am at SS Mary & John's

Primary Age: St Alban's Church Children's Group, during the 9.30am Eucharist service every Sunday.

'Pips': twice monthly informal worship for children and parents at SS Mary & John's, usually first and third Saturdays in the month at 6pm.

Young teenagers: 'Kastout' youth group meets in SS Mary & John's Church on alternate Tuesday nights.

Reverend Adam Romanis (tel: 242396).

What's happening?

DRARA events

Sunday 17 April 1-5pm: 'Play in the Street', Southfield Road.

We are closing the lower half of the road to allow people to play, wander, trike, bike and skateboard without the danger of cars. Contact Petronella Spivey on 724430.

Sunday 22 May 1-5pm: Street Fair in Warneford and Bartlemas Roads.

Stalls, refreshments and entertainments. If you would like to run a stall or activity, contact Judith FitzGerald on 728741 or gfitz@farmersweekly.net

Sunday 19 June 1-5pm: 'Play in the Street', Divinity Road.

Stone Street to Minster Road will be closed – details as above.

Saturday 9 July in the evening: Street Meal, Divinity Road.

Minster Road to Warneford Road will be closed. Anyone wanting to help organise, particularly living in that section of the road, please contact Andy Roscoe on 241214.

Sunday 17th September in the evening: Outdoor film.

Venue tbc: see next newsletter for more details.

East Area Parliament meetings

20 Apr 2005 18:30 Donnington Community Centre, Townsend Square

18 May 2005 18:30 St. Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street

15 Jun 2005 18:30 Donnington Community Centre, Townsend Square

20 Jul 2005 18:30 St. Clement's Family Centre, Cross Street

Church dates

Tue 26th April: Cowley St John Annual Parochial Church Meeting, St Alban's Church Hall.

Thu 5th May (Ascension Day):

7.45am Morning Prayers on top of SS Mary & John's Church Tower, followed by light, but festive, breakfast.

7.30pm Sung Eucharist in SS Mary & John Church.

15-21 May: Christian Aid Week

Artweeks

Oxfordshire Artweeks happens every year – when artists show their work to visitors in a wide range of locations, not just studios and galleries. It has become so big over the past 24 years that it is divided into three main areas – North and South Oxfordshire and the City – and it runs for three weeks from 14 May to 5 June this time round. Here in East Oxford we are part of the City week, which is also the last part of the festival, from 28 May to 5 June. There are 42 venues locally. Look out for the bright yellow and blue signs. Free catalogues showing opening hours and venues throughout the county are available from libraries, shops, pubs, clubs, restaurants, etc or from Alison. Although most artists have work for sale, it is not essential to buy. However it is important to give all the artists your support by visiting as many venues as you can! *Alison Berman* (tel 245378).

Cowley Road Carnival: Saturday 12 June

The Cowley Road Carnival is Oxfordshire's biggest multi-cultural community-led event.

Its overall aims are to:

- ❖ Celebrate the diversity of the communities in East Oxford
- ❖ Provide a range of opportunities for East Oxford's varied communities to participate in Carnival
- ❖ Support the development of skills, knowledge and confidence amongst local artists, musicians and community groups in making their contribution to Carnival

Over months of preparations, Carnival works with local groups and individuals building skills, knowledge and confidence as they prepare their procession costumes or performances. In this way, Carnival provides a real focus for strengthening the community and a sense of pride in what it can achieve. The theme for this year's Carnival, is 'earth', and will be interpreted by the many groups involved in the procession.

The 2005 Carnival is expected to attract over 15,000 members of the public to enjoy the spectacle of a 1,000+ strong Carnival procession, street theatre and a wide variety of entertainment on 20 different sites. In



response to residents' comments in 2004, we have this year closed Divinity Road and Southfield Road to traffic between the hours of 8am and 10pm. (It is early in order to construct stages on the streets in safety). We hope this will enable residents to move around the area via Morrell Avenue, Old Road and London Road, but dissuade visitors from attempting to park here for the Carnival. As last year, we are actively promoting the use of buses, bicycles and feet to get to the event, and have more assistance marketing this message to the county and the city than ever before through the partnership funding from the Urban Cultural Fund via Oxford Inspires. If you have concerns, please give me a call on 200780 to discuss.

Look out for more information in May through letterboxes, and of course we very much hope you will support the Carnival and come and enjoy the day with us.

We will need your help to make the event a success – could you put a poster in your window, or lend a hand with leafleting or shaking a tin? Know a man with a van? Phone 200780 with any offers of assistance. Thanks! *Henrietta Gill*

Useful contacts:

City Councillors, St. Clement's Ward:

Claire Palmer (Green), 26 Union Street, OX4 1JP. Tel 0775 698549 or claire@greenoxford.com

Mary Jane Sareva (Green), 60 Morrell Avenue, Oxford OX4 1ND. Tel 07776 075250 or clrmjsareva@oxford.gov.uk

County Councillor: Craig Simmons (Green), 41 Magdalen Road, OX4 1RB. Tel 202257 or craig@greenoxford.com

Oxford City Council Environmental Officer: Alex Solaja, tel 252821.

Brookes Community Liaison: Anne Ashley, tel 484451 or amashley@brookes.ac.uk

Cowley Road Police Station (non-emergency): tel 335138. Local beat officers are PC 798 David Stares and PC 1299 Chris Griffin (david.stares@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk or chris.griffin@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk).

Sinnet Court: Amanda Green, Manager: 202377, or amanda.green@dominionhg.co.uk. The office is staffed from 8am-6pm Monday-Friday.

For out of hours incidents requiring immediate action call 07796 962015: this will reach a student warden (24 hours).

DRARA: For more information about DRARA activities, contact Mark Norman on 240146 or by email at mark.norman@ashmus.ox.ac.uk