CYCLING AROUND OXFORD – FROM CUMNOR PARISH NEWS, JUNE 2018

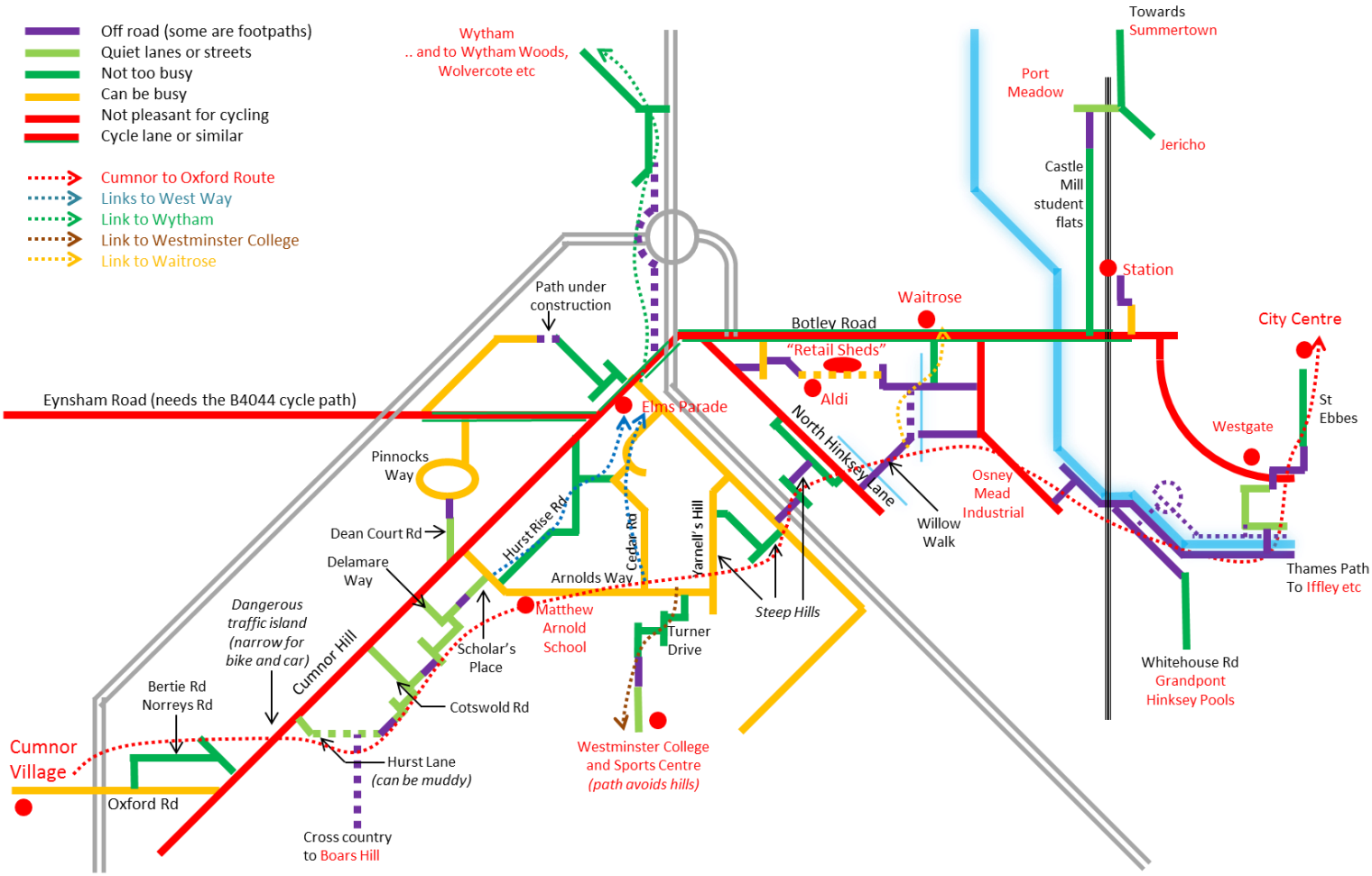
Last month I wrote about leisure cycling for those who are a bit rusty (or have rusty bikes). This time it's about how to get around Cumnor Parish and to the City Centre and other parts of the Oxford area.

There's two major considerations – traffic and hills. These routes provide ways to avoid traffic, but have not generally been signed as cycle routes, and look horrifyingly complicated on the map until you try them out. In terms of hills, the route described to the city centre swaps the endless, tedious, rewardless, mind-numbing slog of Cumnor Hill for a series of short sharp painful stretches away from traffic which you can push the bike if you want.

The Cumnor Hill and Botley Road Bypass for walking and cycling

No – not the dual carriageway! This route is used by Matthew Arnold students in large numbers and many from Botley and North Hinksey to get into the City Centre. But many people are unaware of its existence. It's Oxford City Cycling Route No 8, but you won't find many signs for it. It's complicated, but go along it once or twice and it's easy.

Local cycling routes within Cumnor and West Oxford



From Cumnor Village it uses:-

- Bertie Road and Norrey Road (or just Oxford Road)
- Along the un-made-up Hurst Lane, and through a series of paths between housing estates and using Turnpike Road, Barns Close and Scholars Place to get to Arnolds Way.
- Harcourt Hill, Sweetmans Road and the steep downhill of Raleigh Park Road
- Across Westminster Way under the A34 subway, then steeply down between the allotments to North Hinksey Lane
- The currently lovely Willow Walk

- Osney Mead Industrial Estate to the end, and left through a car park takes you to the Thames Path.
- Under the railway then along the towpath under another bridge to the footbridge that takes you to Trinity Street (signed as Sustrans Route 5).
- Over the pedestrian crossings just by the back of the new Westgate Centre
- Right along by Speedwell Street, then along a cycle path that takes you to Littlegate St and St Ebbes
- What could be simpler?!

Going towards town Cumnor Hill is quicker and as long as there aren't too many builders' vans or temporary traffic lights can be a simpler way to get to West Way. And you can then turn into North Hinksey Lane and use the rest of the route to avoid Botley Road. Even though Botley Road has cycle lanes they are arguably more dangerous than staying in the bus lane or road (certainly on the way back from town).

And further afield?

Within Cumnor Parish there are other links of use:-

- Westminster College with its sports centre has now been linked to Arnolds Way with a path through the new housing (Turner Drive). This saves a horrible hill each way.
- Down to Pinnocks Way via Dean Court Road and a footpath
- Various routes from Arnolds Way to West Way (Hurst Rise Road and Cedar Road). Both are steep and dangerous – Take Care

Going further afield there are other links

- There's a route from North Hinksey Lane, between some offices to Aldi. Using car parks (take very great care in car parks) you can get to most of the retail 'sheds' and to Oatlands Park south of Waitrose.
- The Thames tow path links to Whitehouse Road and Marlborough Rd to get to Hinksey Outdoor Swimming Pool
- The Thames Path is also part of Sustrans Route 5 which goes to Iffley Lock (and even to Didcot and beyond)
- Turn left along a path off West Way just before the A34 flyover, which takes you up to and safely around the Botley Interchange (there are traffic signals to help you) and next to the A34 slip road to get to the link road to the lane that goes to Wytham. From there to Wytham Woods or Wolvercote.
- From just before the station on Botley Rd (by the Youth Hostel) go past the Castle Mill student flats to Port Meadow. Over the bridge to Jericho, or turn left just over the bridge and through the new housing estates takes you to Summertown.

From the City Centre (too complex to show here)

- Via New Inn Hall Street, St Edwards St, and Ship St to the Bodleian Library and Kings Arms and then along Holywell St and Mansfield Road to the University Science Area
- Then down South Parks Road and the Marston Cycleway over the Cherwell – up Ferry Road or similar, then up Jack Straw's Lane to the get to the John Radcliffe – save hours looking for a parking space, and money (assuming you're not trying to get there because you're too ill to cycle)
- Going to the University Science Area and JR, you can us the Castle Mill route (above) and then use St Bernard Road and Bevington Road to get to Parks Road, which avoids the City Centre altogether.

There are various route maps available in cycle shops.

- Cyclox.org has a good cycling map for £1. And www.transportparadise.co.uk/cyclemap is an online version showing many of these routes
- OpenStreetMap and OpenCycleMap can be found on smartphones. www.opencyclemap.org/
- Some route planners are good for cycling such as CycleStreets www.cyclestreets.net which has 'fast' and 'quiet' routes. Much of the route to Oxford shown here is used on the 'quiet' route back from Oxford. (But it can lead you along very muddy tracks elsewhere).

But remember!

- Take lights if there's any chance you won't be back before it's dark
- Wear something bright – preferable a day-glo jacket which is also wind and rain proof. Please don't imagine that looking cool in dark clothes and using your phone will save you from being knocked off your bike by a phone using driver
- Obey the rules of the road – don't go through red lights and always signal to show where you're going. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND RESPECT OTHERS ALWAYS.
- Some of the paths shown are official cycle routes and some are not. In either case give pedestrians the right of way. Blue "Cyclists Dismount" signs are only advisory – for safety for cyclists and pedestrians – you don't have to get off your bike, but if you don't, take extra special care and be extra respectful of others. (Red signs are the compulsory ones).

But also remember that if you cycle round Cumnor and Oxford (rather than driving) everyone will benefit – you'll get fitter and healthier and it'll mean one less car clogging up the roads and parking spaces.

A note on distancing (2020)

Quiet roads are the easiest places to keep a distance from other road users. Most of the footpath links are short enough to see if anyone is coming the other way even where they are narrow.

But be careful on Willow Walk, the subway under the A34 and the towpaths.

Then again, being in the open air, and not being close to other cyclists or pedestrians for a few seconds at most is *probably* ok.