

Ramblers' Oxfordshire Area Annual Report 2009

Officers' reports

Chairman

This has been a difficult year for the Ramblers, not least financially. You will not have received this report in hard copy unless you have specifically requested it. You will either be reading it at the Area AGM (30 January 2010), reading it on the Area website, or having requested an email copy. Your Area EC had to make some difficult decisions at the Ramblers request to reduce our budget and it was decided not to print and post this report. The good news is that it has still been produced, notwithstanding the constitutional requirement to do so.

The 'powers that be' are making more effort to 'reach out' to the membership and we were pleased to have Kate Ashbrook attend our Area EC meeting in October. She answered many difficult questions, some of which were out of her remit, but I commend her for doing so, especially as she told me later that Oxfordshire is not even one of her allocated Areas!

The CRM system has been a controversial issue this year, not least with membership secretaries. I know it has caused frustration and more work, but I am sympathetic to central office. When I worked I designed, not just implemented, application software systems and so have firsthand knowledge of the effort involved. Ok, so the amount of work involved was underestimated, but central office has worked very hard to retrieve the situation. Perhaps I am more tolerant than others, but to paraphrase the quote from the Gospel, "Let he who has never made a misjudgement in his or her life, cast the first stone".

2010 is the Ramblers 75th anniversary and I look forward to the events which we will be organising by way of celebration.

Pat Lonergan

Secretary

This has been a year of change concerning communications from central office for group and area committee members. Over the years, committee members would receive regular postings from central

office. This year, this has stopped and nearly everything is posted on the ramblers' website. Committee members can also opt to receive email reminders of the new postings and most committee members have now done this. It is appreciated that not all of us use the computer or electronic communication as much as central office would like. However, this is the way forward and we have to try to take it on board. Communicating with our members electronically is to be encouraged and most groups could collect email addresses at many occasions, particularly on walks. Henley and Goring group did this about 8 years ago and now collect email addresses from all new members on their welcome letter. This annual report is available by mail, email or can be viewed on our area web site, please encourage other members to request it or to read it on line. All members can now view all the pages on the ramblers website, there is no longer a password needed for access.

This year will see a flurry of communication from central office about the ramblers 75th celebrations. Our special month is November but activities can take place throughout the year. There are two main purposes to these celebrations. One, to highlight the activities and successes that the ramblers organisation has brought to our rights of way network. Two; to have a major membership campaign, highlighting the huge variety of walks that between us we lead. It is hoped that as well as individual group events there might be an area event sometime in the year. If you have any ideas for this, please pass them to a committee member of your group.

Much has happened at central office since General Council 09 but this has led to better communication with the trustees and we are lucky to have Kate Ashbrook as our direct link. The next General Council will be 10th & 11th April and should be a very positive one, details about this event will be passed to your group committee. Voting for delegates for General Council takes place at our area AGM.

Susan Maguire

Treasurer

As mentioned in last year's report our grant from Head Office for the year to September 2009 was reduced in line with the excess funds held at the end of September 2008; our expenditure for the year thus exceeded our income but we still had funds at the year end of £3910.

As the chairman has already mentioned, we have been asked to reduce expenditure wherever possible and are achieving this through the reduction of the costs of printing this report and the walks programme (the latter without any changes in format), and asking groups to economise wherever possible including more use of electronic communications to cut down on printing and postage costs.

The accounts are included at the back of this report.

Peter Stone

Footpath Secretary

Committee

During the year we have welcomed **Robin Hanson** (H&G) to the Footpaths Sub-Committee; he has since replaced Carolyn Maunder. We still have no representative for West Oxon.

Footpath Work

Clearance parties are being organised by Tony Clark (T&W); clearances have already taken place, especially on **Sydenham FP4**, described in November's *South East Walker*. Efforts are also being made to establish work parties in the Vale, possibly with assistance from parishes.

Oxfordshire County Council

The Monitoring Group met in April and October. Two new members of staff have started; Jenny Beardmore has returned from maternity leave to look after Oxford City part-time. The random survey of paths reported 74% usable without difficulty. There are 82 Definitive Map Modification Orders (mostly claims to upgrade to byway, made after the cutoff date) and 30 diversion applications outstanding.

The new Local Transport Plan (LTP3) is being drawn up. There was considerable disquiet about the fact that the previous version had little reference to rights of way; these have now been pushed to the top of the priority list, and funding may be available for projects. One has already started on Marston FP9 north of the Victoria Arms where various strange structures masquerade as stiles; there are also moves to deal with the paths south of Marston Ferry Road and to try to obtain permissive paths or dedications where paths arrive at opposite sides of dangerous roads but don't meet (e.g. the Green Belt Way at the B4027

south-east of Islip). In the meantime Highways Department is being asked to keep verges cut between paths.

The current funding for the **Thames Path** in Oxford City has ended; efforts are being made to secure further funding, and work will continue on smaller projects.

A project to put the Definitive Map online is due to be completed in the spring. We have been told that there will be several useful add-ons, such as (possibly) the ability to click on a location and report obstructions. Those who are familiar with the woes of other computer systems will be familiar with the words of Robbie Burns on the subject, concerning the best laid plans of mice.

The Countryside Service is due to move to Eynsham (the large office block at SP428088) in February; this will be closer to Oxford in distance if not in time. The footpath alongside the office car park has been put back on its definitive line.

The first gating order has been made, for an estate path in **Blackbird Leys**.

Definitive Map claims

The claim for the path across the Thame at Chippinghurst is now 15th in the pending list (18th at this time last year); the parish application for diverting most of the surrounding paths) and extinguishing the path east of Chippinghurst Manor) is third in the list of pending diversions. The lists of pending cases can be found on the OCC website by following Rights of Way – Definitive Map – Modifications and Diversions; they can be found at the bottom of the web page.

The extensive claims in the **Holcombe Lane and Ascott** areas of **Newington and Stadhampton** have been rejected, as has the claim for a path in **Fir Grove and Oakcroft Wood** in Binfield Heath. The extension of **Shiplake FP37 at Lashbrook** under the railway has been confirmed, although the landowner has appealed. Claims for a new path (cul-de-sac at its northern end) across **Waterstock** golf course, a bridleway at **Tittenford Bridge, Wootton** and a byway from the **Radford-Kiddington** road eastwards are in progress. Also still in progress are proposals to modify the paths round **Binfield Heath** playing fields, the claim for extension of **Watery Lane, Charlbury** to Dean, and an attempt to restrict the width of **Lansdowne Road, Wootton**.

Planning and diversions

Domestic diversions at **Alvescot FP17** and **Bucknell FP9** have been confirmed. Another at **Noke FP12** has been confirmed also; the two footballers concerned were refused their application for costs. Unfortunately the law (especially as applied by planning inspectors) is weighted heavily in favour of the landowners; it is not part of the statutory procedure to consider alternative routes, and there must be either substantial loss of convenience or enjoyment to defeat such proposals.

We are still opposing a revised diversion at **Bodicote Mill**, which would remove the view of the mill stream (except via a detour) and move the path from a sunken lane which is probably contemporary with the Domesday mill on this site (but is a mudbath). A proposed diversion at **Frilford FP7** along the River Ock at Millett's Farm has been awaiting determination of ownership of a small triangle of land to the east, so that the diversion can be taken along its shortest route.

The inquiry into the claim for a Town Green at **Warneford Meadow, Oxford** has been won by the applicants, but the NHS is appealing. The diversion orders for FP80/131 in front of **Sobell House** have been confirmed; long before the confirmation the **cancer centre** was opened without being affected by the proceedings.

We are still monitoring the progress of proposed major housing development at **Didcot** and the threat of an enormous **reservoir** south-west of Abingdon. The proposed "eco-town" at **Weston-on-the-Green** appears to be dead, but an eco-extension to **North-West Bicester** is to replace it. The viaduct replacement at **Wolvercote** is running ahead of schedule, and is having little effect on the canal and Thames towpaths.

Diversions of **Churchill FP8, Fimmere BR4, Hanborough FP5, Godington BR8, and Shipton-on-Cherwell FP21/26** have been confirmed. We have accepted proposals for upgrading of **Witney FP4** to bridleway for use as a school cycle track, and diversions of **Idbury FP4** (to connect a cul-de-sac to the network), **Cornbury FP1, Stanton Harcourt FP23, Checkendon FP12** (the last two with provisos for width), **Kidmore End FP3, North Newington BR7** and **Noke BR10**. An attempt to extinguish two dead-end paths in **Westbury (Bucks)** which are (or would be, if it was on the Definitive Map) connected by a path in **Mixbury (Oxon)** has been abandoned. We have suggested alternative routes for diversions of **Benson FP6** at Preston Crowmarsh, to avoid concentrated thistles, and **Cottisford FP8/9**, to

preserve the views of the listed manor house and its 14th-century features.

We are still awaiting results of the consultation on **Chiltern Railways'** plans to upgrade the Oxford-Bicester line to dual-track with services running at 100mph eight times per hour. It seems that the ground under the line is not stable enough (being Otmoor) to run trains at this speed, and some sections (e.g. under Wolvercote roundabout) are too narrow for dualling. They still plan to close **Islip Crossing** and **Oddington FP6** (where a farm crossing 200 metres SW could be used for a diversion). The latest plans show the Kidlington Circular Walk, the Oxford Green Belt Way and the Oxfordshire Way staying on or close to their existing lines.

Obstructions and other matters

Radley Lakes are now to be developed as a nature reserve with full public access by Northmoor Trust, who are still, at the time of writing, keeping closed the paths at **Castle Hill, Little Wittenham**.

Thanks

Finally, my thanks to the footpath secretaries for their hard work, and to anyone else who has helped with footpath matters.

David Godfrey

Membership Secretary

Last year's report was dominated by the problems consequent upon the introduction of the new computer system at Central Office. Unbelievably, this has continued for almost another year. Although it is fair to say we are not encountering as many problems as last year, the fact that central office has allocated another £50,000 to rectify any outstanding flaws in the system speaks for itself.

So, unfortunately, I have to report another decline in our membership figures. Bearing in mind the current economic situation, the recent increase in membership fees and the problems caused by the aforementioned computer system, it is surprising that the decrease is so small.

Membership by groups 30th Sept 2009		
	2008	2009
Banbury & North Oxfordshire	286	276
Bicester & Kidlington	176	172
Didcot & Wallingford	202	193
Henley & Goring	329	326
Oxford City	452	439
Thame & Wheatley	149	155
Twenties & Thirties	146	119
Vale of White Horse	465	443
West Oxfordshire	243	243
Weekend Walkers	N/A	42
Unallocated	12	9
TOTAL	2460	2417

In addition we have three affiliated organisations (down from 8) and one member from the Chipping Norton Rambling Club. It will be seen that the larger percentage decline of the Twenties & Thirties group is accounted for by members transferring to the new Weekend Walkers Group.

Finally, I would like to thank Tony Brown of Henley & Goring Group for all his efforts. Tony has stood down as that group's membership secretary, and has put in a lot of work over the years in reconciling H&G's figures with those sent by central office. I look forward to working with his successor.

Peter Offord

Access

There have been two exciting national developments this year for which the RA had campaigned vigorously – the passing of the **Marine and Coastal Access Act** in November this year and the decision to set up the new **National Park for the South Downs**, which would include the disputed Western Weald area. The new Act provides a framework for managing the demands we put on our seas, improve marine conservation and open up access for the public to the English coast. From now on, and for the next ten years, detailed work will take place to plan, amongst others, the route of the path around the coast. Natural England is already consulting on the 'Scheme' for implementation and when that is agreed they will seek to establish the first stretch along Weymouth Bay in time for the Olympics and work will start on Kent, Somerset, Norfolk, Cumbria and East Riding.

Another piece of legislation for which the RA long campaigned was, of course, the CROW Act of 2000. It is a requirement of this Act that the maps showing the new rights of access have to be reviewed regularly and the first review begins at the end of 2011. It is unlikely to result in big changes, for one thing because of cost, so the RA position will be to protect what we already have and correct errors as well as increasing access to downland. If there are any issues within Oxfordshire please ensure they are passed on through me.

In South Oxfordshire there is a proposal to periodically graze common land at Kingwood Common to improve the quality and variety of the flora and fauna. This will require gated enclosure to contain the stock when they are present. The Nettlebed Commons Project Officer is currently drawing up amended proposals based on recent consultations.

John Case

Countryside

After much heated debate and the long process of submissions and reports, the proposal for an eco-town at 'Weston Otmoor' has been assessed by the Department for Communities and LG as 'not having the potential' for development within the criteria laid down. This is a very satisfactory outcome for us and the many other organisations and individuals who opposed the proposals, although it is apparent that the Dept. has not altogether closed the door on the scheme because it added the words 'at this time' to its decision.

The much more positive news is that the late proposal by Cherwell DC for the development of NW Bicester as an eco-town has been welcomed so far as 'having potential'. Currently they are applying for funding to initiate a number of eco-developments to benefit the whole town and prepare the way for a fully detailed scheme.

Some parts of Thames Water's Draft Management Plan (for the next 25 years), including the argument for a new Upper Thames reservoir at Steventon, have been widely questioned. They have subsequently revised their forecast figures for water requirement downwards and put their new plans for a smaller reservoir back by 5 years. Meanwhile the Secretary of State has ordered a public inquiry to establish whether amongst other things the need for a reservoir has been proven.

The South East Plan for greater housing provision has created a number of proposals across the County for housing developments within and adjoining existing towns. This is causing pressure on greenfield as well as brownfield sites. There was a successful

legal challenge by CPRE to the process used for planning a development of 4000 houses in open country south of Grenoble Road in Oxford. These houses have now been excluded from the plan, for the time being at least. The public consultations in South Oxfordshire for more housing included a proposal to develop a greenfield site owned by the Town Council in Henley to which we objected on the grounds of being intrusive and damaging to the countryside. In this case, the Town council acted quickly and successfully gained Town Green status for the site.

The long process for reducing landfill through Energy from Waste seemed to be coming to a close with OCC naming the preferred bidder as Viridor (at Ardley). However, the Planning and Regulation Committee has refused the applications both at Ardley and at Sutton Courteney because that they were not convinced that the need for such a facility was sufficient to outweigh the effects on the countryside. Watch this space.

John Case

Walks Coordinator

The Summer and Winter 2009 programmes comprised 362 and 310 walks (including a few other events) respectively, running from April 2009 to March 2010. The actual walks totaled 659.

Of the 659 walks, 627 were in the middle categories, Leisurely and Moderate.

Banbury & North Oxfordshire Group submitted the most number of walks during the year with 145 walks. Notwithstanding this huge number of walks, expressed per number of members, the Weekend Walkers pipped them with 30 walks submitted, from 42 members, approaching one per member!

The most walks goes to Len Lamb of Banbury & North Oxfordshire Group both with 22 walks, followed closely by Lionel Howse of Bicester & Kidlington Group with 18.

185 leaders, couples or other sets of leaders submitted walks averaging 3.6 walks per 'leader', a slight but insignificant increase on last year. The shortest distance was 2.5 miles, the longest 25 and the average 7.5, yet again, exactly the same as previous years!

51% of the walks were at the weekend, just a 1% decrease on last year so we are still catering well for our working members. There were 101 walks on a Thursday, a healthy increase on last year. The good news is that there were 48 walks on a Tuesday, nearly one per week, which is encouraging, though this

compares with 137 on a Wednesday, so even more on a Tuesday would be nice. The Wednesday total is an increase of 5 on last year but once again is outshone by Sunday with 209 walks!

It still appears that hardly anyone wants to lead on a Monday (14), so, again, I think we should concentrate on giving more choice mid-week, Tuesday through Thursday. Again, ideally, I would like a group to commit to regular walks on a Tuesday, or at least more leaders doing so.

Thanks for all the hard work put in by all concerned, especially, yet again, to Peter Offord of Banbury & North Oxfordshire group who typed in both sets of his group's walks - fantastic! Walks can be listed on the area website www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk by clicking on the appropriate navigation entries.

Looking ahead, I am minded to introduce a new 'code' for the Dogs data, that is, "L", which would be interpreted as "Dogs on leads please". The walks organisers will be consulted.

Pat Lonergan

Website

On the Area website, www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk, four of the geographically-based groups now have multiple-pages, with Henley & Goring 'leading the way' with six pages. Bear in mind that the 20s&30s and Weekend Walkers have their own websites anyway.

The most significant development the year was the addition of the Start Places pages. Rather than re-invent the wheel, I will repeat what I wrote in the Special Notice section of the Winter 2009 walks programme:

The Area website now has a number of pages listing suggested start places for walks. These are indexed both alphabetically and by 10km * 10km grid reference, such as SP50 within which, for example, Oxford is situated. The index page is:

<http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/startplaces.htm>

As a matter of policy, this reference is not in the website menu, so I advise you to put it in your Favorites (sic) if using Internet Explorer or to bookmark it if using Firefox.

Pat Lonergan

Group reports

Banbury & North Oxfordshire

Our 2008 AGM held at the Bowling Green Steakhouse Restaurant, Banbury saw all the existing committee officers re-elected. John Roberts remained on the committee with Frank Duty taking his place as Footpath Secretary. Lesley Milne was also elected onto the committee bringing our total to ten members.

At 30th September 2009, membership of the group stood at 276, not much change from the previous year's total. We are still experiencing problems with the computer programme at central office and our membership figure should not be accepted as accurate.

Our walks programme continues to be well supported. Many thanks to all the leaders for the very enjoyable walks which you put on. Particular thanks to Len Lamb who led seven evening walks during the summer. Jim Tipping is leading a walk on Christmas Day - quite innovative for us. Over the Christmas/New Year period we have twelve walks organised which is a record. Hopefully, we can recruit some new members at this time.

Peter Offord, our walks organiser, celebrated his 65th birthday in June in some style, with a nine-mile walk from Newnham taking in several villages and ending with a celebration meal at a pub in Badby. The walk was entitled the "Snorscombe Snooze". After champagne at the beginning and birthday cake during the walk, I understand everyone had a snooze in the afternoon!

Evelyn Ruck and David Godfrey who have been committee members for many years are retiring at the AGM. Thank you both for your advice and excellent work during this time.

Sadly, I have to report that members Norah Barnes and Margaret Lavell died during this year. Norah and Peter Barnes have been very supportive members for quite a number of years and have led many enjoyable walks. It is good to see Peter and his family still coming out with us.

Margaret Lavell was a member of the Wednesday walkers and she and her late husband Bob enjoyed many happy times with us.

Finally, I thank all members of the committee for their support and hard work during the year.

Charles Woolland

Bicester & Kidlington

Our 2008 AGM at Hethe was attended by 17 people. The AGM was followed by an informative talk given by Sarah Aldous, Footpaths Officer from Oxfordshire County Council.

In addition to our usual varied walks programme, our group had a weekend away in May, when nine people went to Rutland Water. During a walk there, we were lucky enough to see an osprey, one of a number of birds being introduced to establish a breeding colony.

We organised another quiz evening at Sturdy's Castle which was enjoyed by all who attended.

We had a stall at the Bicester Carnival again and, for the first time, we had a stall at the switch-on of the Christmas lights in Bicester.

The proposed upgrade of the rail link between Bicester and Oxford will result in some path closures, new bridges and diversions. David Godfrey has been busy putting forward suggestions to minimise the impact on our walks.

Susan Brockall is stepping down as Treasurer, Tony Coleman is stepping down as Footpaths Officer, and Wendy West is stepping down as Membership Secretary; our thanks to them.

Colin Morgan

Didcot & Wallingford

Our group has had another good year having contributed many regular walks to the Area Programme and been active in footpath maintenance. Our numbers have remained steady at around 200 and we had successful weekends walking near Avebury in May and near Buxton in September. Following our AGM in November an additional 2 members have joined our committee. Just last week there were 16 people on our New Year's Day walk near Goring and plans are already underway for our weekend away this autumn to the Brecon Beacons.

Nick Morley

Henley & Goring

Thanks to the many Members who have been willing to be walks and trips organisers this has been another very active year with a wide variety of activities. Since our annual lecture in January (this time on the history of local buildings and their occupants) there has been a series of winter linear walks in the North Downs, a barn dance, linear

walking along the Chiltern Way, two promotion days, a barbecue, the start of this winter's linear walks along the Cotswold way and a huge variety of short and long walks and finally, to celebrate, a Christmas walk leaders' dinner. There have been quite a lot of themed walks and local visits and also, once again, several well supported and successful residential trips to places as diverse as Hope Cove in Devon, the Lake District and the French Alps. About 60 members attended the AGM and the supper afterwards.

Alongside these activities, serious work has been done on gathering information and witness statements and contributing to inquiries and planning proposals. Notably the inquiry into the path at Shiplake resulted in a successful outcome (although that is now subject to appeal) and in other cases landowners have been contacted with regard to rights of way. We have also contributed to pre planning consultations - one on proposed siting of expansion to the housing stock and one on using common land for grazing.

We continue to work with the Chiltern Society both to exchange information and to help on their very regular series of working parties to keep the rights of way clear.

John Case

Oxford

Our Walks' Programme continues to be a lively and full calendar of walks providing walks on nearly every Wednesday. Elizabeth Yates is to be congratulated on her work in gathering these walks. There have been several weekend walks including the long-distance Roman Way path. Our membership has seen a small drop in numbers but is good considering the recession. Helen and Barry Burlingham have ensured that our programme and publicity notices have reached every library. Tony Dale has been working with the Oxford City Council about the state of the footpaths, particularly the path beside the River Cherwell. Robin Harrison has provided sterling support as Treasurer and with our independent auditor Bob Spray, they have alerted Ramblers' central office to committee concerns about the impact of the recession on Ramblers' funds.

I should like to thank all the members of the committee and the walks' leaders for their involvement and continuing support of the Oxford Group.

Elaine Steane

Thame & Wheatley

The group has enjoyed a relatively good year, with an extensive programme of walks, varied social events, increasing members, effective publicity and practical footpath work.

On the walks front, walks organiser David Mould managed to persuade our established leaders to contribute 43 walks to the programme. Ruth Tossell had a memorable 38 people attending her first walk and our midweek walks attract increasing support.

Our Spud Supper, held at Christchurch hall on 17 July, attracted some 40 people, many of whom braved atrocious with weather conditions to follow Tony Clark on his town walk. Other stayed in the comfort of the hall entertained with quizzes and puzzles by committee member, Bob Ward, calling on his experience as an HF leader.

Publicity Officer Ruth Cornish's contribution this year has been outstanding. Our May 'Get Walking' weekend, both the Thame Town Hall stand and the Sunday walk, proved well worthwhile, attracting more support than any of us could have predicted, and providing a useful boost to our membership figures.

Again, on Ruth's initiative, the group launched its well-received first newsletter, with a key aim of keeping members better informed of our activities. The group also benefits from Ruth's efforts to persuade parish councils to publicise our walks on their notice boards and in their publications.

Chris Bignal, treasurer and membership secretary, reports membership levels increasing from a figure of 147 last year to a new figure of 155, thus reversing the trend of recent years.

Footpath Officer, Tony Clark, has maintained his excellent work in serving on a number of liaison committees and extending his network of parish footpath wardens. Tony has been instrumental in working with Oxfordshire County Council to re-establish Sydenham fp4, a footpath which, according to the owner, has been unwalkable for more than thirty years. Tony has also joined OCC in their efforts to re-instate an illegally diverted footpath on the Sydenham approach to Thame Park.

Finally, we acknowledge the work of secretary, Janet Noyce, backing up the work of the committee and an invaluable help with all of our activities.

At the group AGM, held on 7 November, at Chinnor Reading Room, the committee was re-elected intact. As a result, we can safely look forward with confidence to meeting the challenges of the coming year.

Twenties & Thirties

The year started well with the group's AGM on 25 January at the Stanton St John Village Hall. A full committee consisting of members within the 20s and 30s age range was elected. The creation of the new Weekend Walkers group was announced at the meeting and its inaugural meeting took place after the main AGM. A full committee was elected for the new group. Transitions were carried out for all the committee roles and both groups are now functioning independently of one another.

Throughout the year, the group had a busy programme of walks and social events with walks most Sundays attended by an average of 10-25 people and many new members joining since the beginning of the year. The Get Walking Day walk at the end of May in Oxford contributed to recruiting several of the new members. The overall numbers for the year may not reflect this increase in membership due to some transfers to the new Weekend Walkers group.

There have been a few joint walks with the Oxon Weekend Walkers, the Chilterns 20s&30s and the Wiltshire 20s&30s groups. A few new walk leaders have come forward this year, which has been really appreciated by all, especially the small set of members who lead most walks.

During the summer months, a number of short summer evening walks were held, mostly on Fridays, with one on a sunny Wednesday night. Three weekends away were held to Shropshire, where we again met with the Shropshire Young Walkers group (who are visiting us in the spring), to the Brecon Beacons and to the New Forest.

On the social side, the group enjoyed a couple of theatre nights, a summer outdoor concert, a very popular Tapas evening, a few pub nights, a canal boat day trip, a greyhound racing event and some bowling outings. On midsummer's day, a joint all day countryside pub-crawl was held with the Weekend Walkers group and a joint Christmas buffet is planned for early December.

Alice Marten

Vale of White Horse

This year the Vale Group has held its regular events like the Spring Meeting in Letcombe Bassett and the visit by the London Blind Ramblers. We had a stand at the Uffington Show but did not get sufficient

students on our Leadership Navigation and Planning course. Perhaps everyone who would like such a course has been on it now?

We had a good walks programme organised by Maria Simpson and I would like to encourage more of our members to come on the group walks. We know you like walking, so why not walk with us? If there is anything members would like to change about the walks in the programme, time, length, venue, accessibility, let me know and we will try adding new types.

The Vale countryside is slightly less under threat as I write this than it was a year ago. The remaining Radley Lakes have been saved, the incinerator will not be built at Sutton Courtenay, and the reservoir is disappearing into the future. There is still pressure for more new homes everywhere though so we need to be vigilant throughout the planning process to make sure that Rights of Way are preserved and that the occupants of these new houses have easy access to the countryside around them. Happy walking in the year ahead!

The Vale committee has a new volunteer, Jim Parke, whom I would like to welcome. While the committee been working hard on your behalf, it would be good to have a few more people to contribute ideas and opinions. Anyone interested should contact me: john@jcgordon.plus.com.

John Gordon

Weekend Walkers

The Weekend Walkers Group was officially formed at the 20s-30s AGM in January 2009. We elected our own committee and most of the positions were filled by members who had previously been in the 20s-30s group but now were no longer within the age bracket of that group. The main objective of the 20s-30s groups is to encourage younger members of the community to join the Ramblers and their core identity should reflect this. The objective of the Weekend Walkers is to provide a group that walks predominantly at weekends; to promote our group and the aims of the Ramblers, to lead more walks and encourage all our members to take part in the running of our group. We actively recruit new members in the working age group to our group. We maintain links with the Oxfordshire 20s-30s via email and through joint walks several of which were held over the last year.

We would like to thank Area for the initial funding to enable us to set up as a group. Our group treasurer Ian Feetenby set up a bank account and a group budget was formed. The first aim was to pay the annual cost of our web site.

The web site became fully active as a stand-alone item in May/June this year. It is an excellent source of information about the group and our walk programme and is regularly updated. It is our main conduit for contacting our members, inputting walks onto our programme and for potential members wanting to join the group. I would like to thank Alan Rew our web master for his time and effort in setting this up and maintaining it' building on earlier work by Pete Norris.

Initially the Weekend Walkers held a walk once every two weeks, as the group established itself and new members joined we have had the capacity to put walks on every week, mostly on Sundays. We have scheduled short evening walks during the summer and the occasional walk on a Saturday to add to the diversity of the programme as well as a challenging 25-mile walk on Good Friday. I would like to thank walk's co-ordinator Vanessa Corrick for her time and effort in developing our programme and all the walk leaders who put walks on this year. We will continue actively to encourage all our members to have an input to the walk and social programme of the group.

The group had its publicity launch on the 6th and 7th of June. Our publicity officers Steve and Lorna Swanton took part in an interview on BBC Radio Oxford to promote the group and three walks were held in various parts of the county that weekend. This attracted new members to the group over the following weeks. The walks are also advertised in the local press, daily info and the Oxford Mail.

Our group numbers are growing and we have 42 to date, 10 of these are new to the walking organisation. There appears to be a long delay in processing new and current memberships from National Office. This can only be attributed to the current financial and staffing situation within Ramblers, which hopefully will be resolved soon.

This year our social programme included several pub evenings, a 'behind the scenes' visit to the Bodleian Library, trips to the theatre and restaurants; these gathered momentum through out the year as more people took part. We are looking to expand the social programme next year. Some of our members are planning walking weekends away to Wales and Cheshire; such events are popular and well attended.

Pete Norris and Caroline Black have stood down as members without portfolio from the committee. Our publicity officers Steve and Lorna Swanton and Jon Yeadon our area representative will be standing down at the AGM. I would like to thank these and all members of our committee for their time and effort over the last year. We hope to recruit new committee members at the forthcoming AGM.

Gavin Powell

West Oxfordshire

The AGM was held in the Combe Reading Room on 5th December 2009

We welcomed some new faces.

Income was £5.78, expenditure £14.00 and we had £286.84 in funds.

Membership in October had been 243 members, now 237 (about same as last year when was 240).

Ann Jones retired from being membership secretary after many years in post. Pat Jennings was elected in her place.

The cost of sending out circulars was about £60. It was agreed that no separate circular would be sent out about the AGM, we would rely on the notice in the programme.

A note should be put about this in the programme.

Di Pearson

Income & Expenditure Account for year to 30th September 2009

		<u>2008</u>
INCOME		
Allocation from Ramblers National Fund	5,895	13,750
Walk Program advertisements	440	440
Bank Interest	37	186
Share Dividends	18	22
Sundry		<u>100</u>
TOTAL INCOME	<u>6,390</u>	<u>14,498</u>
EXPENSES		
Walks Programmes	3,354	3,524
South East Walker	1,794	1,721
Annual Report & AGM	1,790	1,663
Group funding	2,125	2,295
Campaigns & Casework	81	821
Publicity	516	224
Management & Administration	<u>394</u>	<u>573</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>10,054</u>	<u>10,821</u>
EXCESS / (DEFICIT) of INCOME over EXPENDITURE	<u>(3,664)</u>	<u>3,677</u>

Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2009

		<u>2,008</u>
RESERVES		
At start of year	7,574	3,897
Add Surplus / (Deficit) for year	<u>(3,664)</u>	<u>3,677</u>
At 30th September 2009	<u>3,910</u>	<u>7,574</u>
ASSETS		
Shares in Ramblers Holidays	433	415
Bank Balance	5,284	7,401
Debtors	<u>335</u>	-
	6,052	7,816
Less Creditors	<u>2,142</u>	<u>242</u>
Net Assets at 30th September 2009	<u>3,910</u>	<u>7,574</u>

Notes

The accounts are prepared in accordance with guidelines from the Ramblers' Association.

The Area's main income comes from a grant from the Ramblers central funds based on an expenditure budget with a reduction to take account of surplus reserves at the beginning of the financial year.

Costs are marginally down on the previous year; further cost savings are being implemented during 2009/10 in light of the current financial difficulties being experienced by the Ramblers.

Peter C Stone Treasurer
8th November 2009

Independent Examiner's Statement

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group Independent Examination Guidelines, I consider the Oxfordshire Area accounts to have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year to 30th September 2009.

Signed

L Oates

Date

30th November 2009

Lorraine Oates
22 St Peters Road
Abingdon, OX14 3SJ