



OXFORDSHIRE RAMBLERS

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 2022



JIM PARKE RIP



Jim was the chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers Area Council for the past four years. He resigned just a few weeks ago after having been diagnosed with terminal cancer. Sadly, Jim passed away on Christmas Day.

Jim was a very active Ramblers volunteer. As well as chairing the Oxfordshire Area Council, he served as Footpath Officer for the Vale Group and led many walks.

About ten years ago he established, with Susan Maguire, the Oxfordshire Ramblers Parish Path Warden (PPW) Network. He continued as Coordinator of the PPW Network, regularly holding workshops for new recruits. Jim was also coordinator of the Vale of White Horse Path Volunteers, and was an active member of this group until very recently.

In his typically organised fashion, once he was aware that his illness was terminal he worked hard to make sure replacements were in place for his many roles. He was a great friend to many and will be missed very much. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

VICE-CHAIR

This report on behalf of Jim has been brought together by various people and also draws on Jim's reports through the year.

Your Area Council met 4 times during the year following the now familiar Zoom procedure for holding meetings which has proved successful.

The year started off well with Jim having a 5 min radio slot early January on BBC Radio Oxford speaking about "The joys of walking in wintertime".

As part of the Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW) project, Jim was in contact with Jack Cornish from Central Office to pass on the information he had collated from his network of PPWs on those Oxfordshire paths which ought to be saved. He was subsequently approached by an academic from Oxford Brookes who is working on a project related to DLYW looking at the historical reasons why paths would have not been mapped. A few of us met with one of the academics and hope to maintain the relationship.

Because we no longer distribute a paper walks programme it was agreed that a copy of the Annual Report should be sent by post before the Area AGM to each member without email who had opted in to receive information.

Jim attended the H&G 25th anniversary celebrations where Kate Ashbrook was the speaker.

I would like to thank most heartily all Area Officers and Group Representatives for their support and contribution to the running of Oxfordshire Ramblers; to the members who volunteer to lead the walks and who also engage in other activities - our Parish Path Wardens and our Path Maintenance teams. To you all our gratitude and hearty thanks.

I know you will find the following reports interesting and informative. They bear testimony to the continuing healthy state of Rambling in this our county of Oxfordshire.

John Gordon

SECRETARY



We have continued with the meetings via Zoom because it was found that one of the advantages of the virtual meeting was that Area members did not have to travel from all areas of the county resulting more people attending and shorter meetings.

The Area computer has been loaned to B&K for their Membership Secretary to use.

I have in the past year attended courses by Central Office via Zoom which consist of using the Access database, the rebranding of the Ramblers Logo and recruiting new members all of which I have found interesting and informative together with attending the newly formed cluster meetings. Central office has changed the Support Team Contact for Areas, though our point of contact hasn't changed.

I also attended a course on "how to run a successful AGM", the conclusion was that a successful AGM was providing cakes at the end and if possible, together with an interesting speaker.

The use of Zoom in having meetings and courses has managed more members to attend courses where otherwise they wouldn't have been able to, this is one of the few positive side-effects of COVID.

Social media has enabled us to keep in contact with members via email, newsletters and various Facebook pages which have proved to be a great way of sharing walks and ideas with our members.

Rosemary Williams

TREASURER



The majority of the Area's income was from the allocation of funds from the Ramblers Association. Significantly less funding was requested for the year 2021-22, following the decision to cease publication of the printed Walks Booklet, and in order to reduce our Reserves.

Major expenditure items include:

- allocation of funds to the Oxfordshire Ramblers Groups (£1580);
- South East Walker (£1160), under the 'Newsletters/publicity' category;
- a replacement brushcutter (£800), included in the 'Practical work' category;
- brushcutter training for 5 operatives (£1150), included in the 'Practical work' category;
- two kissing gates in the Stadhampton area (£1000) – designated for next year.

As planned, our Reserves have reduced significantly during the year (£6249). Our funding request for next financial year 2022-23 is £933 less than our expected expenditure to further reduce our reserves to within the desired limits (40%-100% of annual expenditure).

Richard Birch

Income & Expenditure for the year ended 30 September 2022

		<u>2022</u>		<u>2021</u>	
		<u>£</u>		<u>£</u>	
INCOME					
Allocation from Ramblers National Fund		4129		5372	
DLYW (Restricted)		200		0	
Other		50		0	
TOTAL INCOME		<u>4379</u>		<u>5372</u>	
EXPENSES					
Group Allocations		1580		2681	
Group (Other)		435		0	
Walks programmes		0		0	
Walks related		62		0	
Walks leader training		0		0	
Newsletters/publicity		1561		1204	
Publication/goods costs		0		0	
Campaigns/casework		240		370	
Practical work		1949		1939	
DLYW (Restricted)		18		0	
Meetings (inc. AGM)		0		0	
Admin		144		44	
Other		45		40	
TOTAL EXPENSES		<u>6034</u>		<u>6277</u>	
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		<u>-1655</u>		<u>-906</u>	
Balance Sheet as at 30 September					
ASSETS					
Bank Balance		<u>7249</u>		<u>8904</u>	
RESERVES					
General Fund brought forward		8904		9810	
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year		-1655		-906	
Designated funds (2 x kissing gates)		-1000			
TOTAL RESERVES		<u>6249</u>		<u>8904</u>	
Reserves (% of annual expenditure)		152%		236%	

FOOTPATH SECRETARY



Oxfordshire County Council: The Ramblers are represented at the Monitoring Group and the District Fora, which discuss strategy and important cases. Meetings have restarted post Covid. All the Field Officer posts are now filled.

Definitive Map: 56 cases are on the list. Of these 19 are being investigated and three have been determined (two accepted, one refused). Seventeen have had modification orders made, of which five have received objections and five have been confirmed. Seventeen are shown on the list as not started. Since last report 16 orders have been confirmed.

Committee: D&W and B&NO lack Footpath Officers. These posts need to be filled urgently.

Planning and diversions: There are 32 diversion cases on the list. Six planning diversions (made by districts) and 21 OCC diversions are in progress. One planning order and fifteen OCC diversion orders have been confirmed this year.

Obstructions: B&NO, Vale, B&K, Oxford City and T&W Groups have clearance teams.

Across the county: The paths at Mixbury have been confirmed after the objector refused to attend the public inquiry. We are pursuing Tiddington FP5/6 where the stiles are nose-on-knees jobs and, after struggling over, you roll down the steep bank. The inquiry into Culham FP1 rail crossing is on January 24. Work on the Marcham BR17 bridge is delayed until the landowner signs the agreement. We are objecting to a diversion at Coldron Mill, where the route would be a tunnel in summer.

David Godfrey

MEMBERSHIP

Group	As at end of September 2020	As at end September 2021	As at end June 2022	As at end September 2022	Change over last 3 mths	% Change over last 3 mths	Change over last 12 mths	% Change over last 12 mths	Change over last 24 mths	% Change over last 24 mths
BNO	299	296	286	284	-2	-0.7	-12	-4.1	-15	-5.0
OX	281	287	286	283	-3	-1.0	-4	-1.4	2	0.7
Vale	309	318	319	323	4	1.3	5	1.6	14	4.5
WOXON	174	192	191	191	0	0.0	-1	-0.5	17	9.8
B&K	192	189	204	206	2	1.0	17	9.0	14	7.3
D&W	166	177	168	168	0	0.0	-9	-5.1	2	1.2
H&G	336	363	385	384	-1	-0.3	21	5.8	48	14.3
T&W	183	192	198	199	1	0.5	7	3.6	16	8.7
Hike Oxon	57	53	60	63	3	5.0	10	18.9	6	10.5
WW	139	147	147	151	4	2.7	4	2.7	12	8.6
Others	110	96	100	103	3	3.0	7	7.3	-7	-6.4
Total	2246	2310	2344	2355	11	0.5	45	1.9	109	4.9

Oxon membership continues to increase slowly but steadily. There is no indication that the pandemic has had a significant impact on membership numbers this year.

PARISH PATH WARDEN NETWORK

The network of PPWs has remained relatively stable this year with a few retirements and new volunteers. The annual workshop for new volunteers hasn't been held for the last few years but one is planned for March 2023. Parishes currently without a PPW are listed on the area web <https://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/footprotect/parish-path-wardens.html> at the bottom of the page. Please get in touch if you would like to monitor a parish near you.

John Gordon

PUBLICITY – we currently have no publicity officer

WALKS CO-ORDINATOR



2022 has been a relatively normal year for our walks programme, with no restrictions due to the pandemic.

When the pandemic started production of the Oxfordshire Walks Booklet was suspended with walks published only online on the Ramblers websites. This provided the greater flexibility required to respond to the ever-changing restrictions due to the pandemic. Once all restrictions had eased the Area Council discussed the possibility of restarting the publication of the Booklet. A clear majority felt that the value of the booklet would be greatly diminished if it

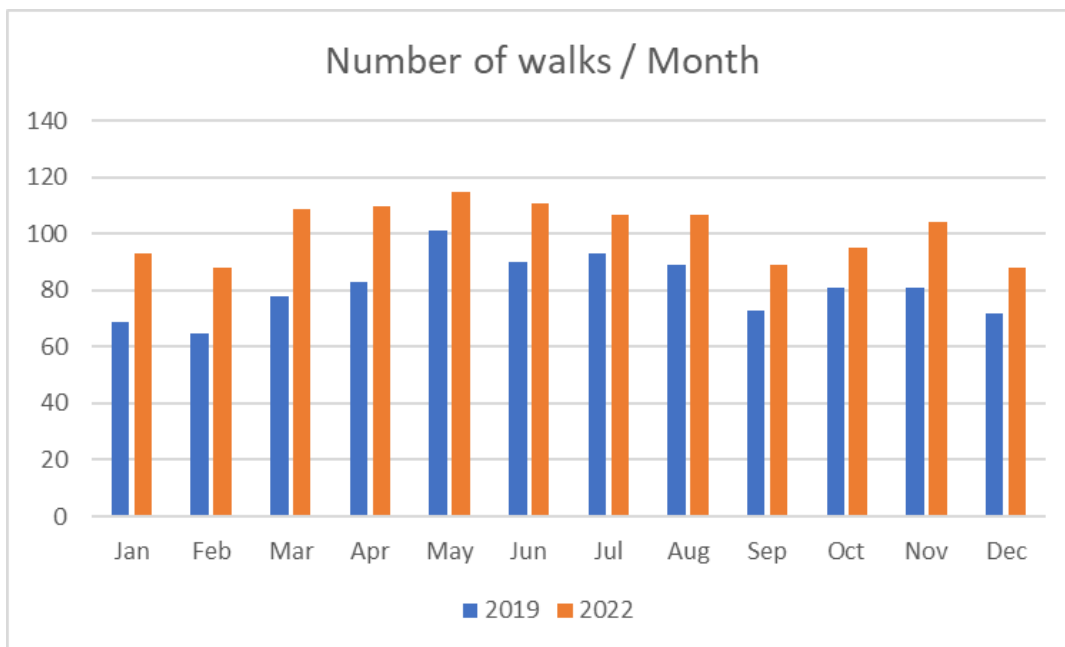
did not contain walks from all of the eight geographical groups. As some groups did not wish to commit to a printed 6-month programme it was agreed that publication of the booklet would cease. We therefore now rely on the on-line walks listings and the printable monthly listing giving all Oxfordshire walks.

During the year a number of improvements were made for all Oxfordshire walks uploaded to the Group Walks and Events Manager (GWEM) using the excel spreadsheet:

- Accurate plotting of starting places using modified 10-figure Grid References;
- Addition of What-3-Words for starting places;
- Addition of Google Map and Street Map links for starting places.

During 2022 there have been over 1200 led walks (5% Easy, 40% Leisurely, 46% Moderate, 9% Strenuous). Distances varied from 2.5 miles up to 18 miles. The main change since before the pandemic is that the number of Strenuous grade walks has more than doubled to 111.

The bar chart below compares the number of walks each month in 2022 with walks in 2019, before the pandemic started. Overall there has been a staggering 25% increase in the number of walks, with Bicester & Kidlington (+66%) and Henley & Goring (+49%) leading the way. Huge thanks to all of our Walk Leaders and Group Walks Organisers!



Richard Birch

WALKING ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS OFFICER

There is not a lot to report. Two concerns are the solar panel farms on agricultural land and a proposed road from Didcot to near Nuneham Courtenay.

OxCam Arc

There is still major concern about developments across the arc which are now mainly developer led. For further information on the campaign against the arc proposals visit the following website:

www.stopthearc.org.

Britchcombe Farm Camping Site, Uffington

The new owners have a proposal to turn a small casual summer campsite into a major year round site including static caravans. It will have a major impact on the AONB and important pre-historic sites such as the Uffington White Horse. The area is supporting the campaign against the proposals. Dave Cavanagh is representing the RA on the campaign group. This campaign is still on going.

Access – Nothing to report.

Terry Pollard

WEBSITE

In early 2022 the area website was 're-branded' as part of Ramblers national strategy. This meant delving in to unusual parts of the site, but comprehensive guidance was provided by Central Office and the team supporting ramblers-webs.

The Weekend Walkers now have more of a presence on the main website and now have Walking and Contacts (sub-)menu items in addition to their existing home 'page'.

Pat Lonergan

OXFORDSHIRE GROUP REPORTS

BANBURY & NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Emerging from pandemic restrictions has been successful, with over 200 walks, following a weekly schedule: Wednesday afternoon usually leisurely, Thursday evening summer, Saturday morning strenuous and Sunday morning moderate. We also ran monthly walks and extras, especially the popular Christmas walks. We had 29 leaders, several of them new, some leading soon after joining. More leaders would be welcome, we can arrange assistance.

The monthly walks programme gives leaders more flexibility to plan over a shorter period, but is more commitment for the Walks Organiser. We normally had walks planned two months in advance, thank you to those who commit further ahead.

Longer and further afield Sunday walks are not attracting previous numbers and fewer members from other groups are joining us. Changes seem to be because of demographics, changed habits post-pandemic and individual circumstances (perhaps for similar reasons, we have 3 vacant committee roles).

Since October 2021 we have produced a printable listing of walks in the format of the former booklet. These sheets are welcomed, so we expect to continue.

Our membership numbers have held up; though several people left the Area and others left after ceasing walking, new membership approximately compensated for attrition.

Socially, it was good to put on a Christmas meal and summer garden party once again.

Our group bank balance opened on £1,077 and closed on £705; in support of maintaining local paths, we invested in two kissing gates in Tadmarton. We thank our outgoing Treasurer, Mick Knott, after his long service.

Stuart Dyer

BICESTER & KIDLINGTON



We continued with our busy schedule of walks during the summer mostly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays. The Friday evening walks during the summer were popular again this year and fish and chips in local pubs are always enjoyed by group members.

By popular demand we repeated our walk in Regents Park and Primrose Hill in London in early September. A picnic lunch on Primrose Hill overlooking London and the City is the highlight of the walk and the visit to a pub before boarding the train for Bicester at Marylebone is equally popular.

These social events are important and help to bond our group members. Fifteen of us spent a long weekend at an HF Holiday Hotel in Dovedale in September, we were blessed by fine weather and we are already planning next year's holiday.

Photographs of our walks on Facebook continue. We believe this is helping to increase our membership which is now close to 210, far exceeding our target of 200 for this year.

Plans are in place for our AGM in November and our annual Christmas Lights walk in London followed by a meal in a restaurant close to Westminster.

BLITZ & KLEAN

On the 28th February 2022 we started the season off with 5 of us working on path 398/2/40 at Wendlebury, approximately 40 yards between the pedestrian rail bridge and the farm yard. Mainly low growing briars which were very effective trip hazards. The wooden foot bridge was also cleared of brambles.

We cleared path 398/2/20 also in Wendlebury from the pedestrian rail bridge all the way to the motorway bridge. Fortunately we had a new volunteer with a brush cutter so was able to complete this in one day and still had time for a tea break. The field beyond the bridge looked as if it had been ploughed so a clear path for miles!

Scythe course – I had confirmation of a place and hire tool for the 28th May 2022. The day was at Cogges Farm near Witney.

This came about as my certificate for the brush cutter was due for a refresher session. I was finding it quite tiring carrying this machine and all the necessary gear associated with it across fields for 20-30 minutes before actually starting to clear paths. It was also the time of Cop 26 which made me think should we be polluting the air that we are trying to enjoy if there is no need. I guess it's getting the balance.

8th June 2022 – Oxford Countryside Access Team decided to cancel the Summer Forum due to low numbers. This was re-scheduled to take place in October 2022 but again there was low uptake so is now set for the 9th November 2022 via zoom.

11th June 2022 – e mail from a fellow rambler reporting path 229.4 in Kidlington as being blocked at both ends. I visited on two occasions to size the job up and we commenced on Monday 4th July 2022. It took two sessions to clear it. The path runs from the bottom of Water Eaton Lane, Gosford through to the main Oxford - Kidlington Road near the A34 bridge. We received thanks from at least two locals. This has in fact opened up an approximate 2 mile circular walk.

15th June 2022 – Received e mail from member of the public regarding a blocked path in Yarnton. He had apparently used the On Line OCC reporting tool but got no satisfaction. From the pictures it looked as though a new fence had been erected and the builder had put bracing struts across the path to support the new post/fence and not returned to take them down and then grass had grown amongst it all plus domestic clippings dumped. I passed it on to OCC Countryside team to take up with the owner.

Begbroke 7th September 2022 a member of the public reported Path 229.4 a newly diverted path that was becoming impassable due to brambles and nettles. One of our volunteers local to the problem completed the task on the 11th.

On the evening of 29th September 2022 we joined forces with the 3rd Bicester Scout group again and cleared path 129/3/30. There were approximately 12 from the scout group and 5 of us. We just managed to finish before darkness descended. Quite a few of the older scouts had moved on so we had a younger group than usual. All appeared to enjoy the session.

We had 5 people get in touch wanting to join us and I have added their e mails to the circulation list.

It is great news that people are wanting to join us in clearing paths however demand for our services appears to be dwindling. Four or five years ago when I contacted O.C.C. they were sending me lists of paths that needed attention and we were averaging one a month. During the past two or three years this has dwindled to one or two per year and this year there were no referrals from them at all.

All the paths cleared in the past 12 months have either been reported by members of the public or by ramblers members.

The e mail volunteer list is gradually growing and currently stands at 18 contacts.

Ian Baldwin

DIDCOT & WALLINGFORD

Though the group has continued to offer at least one walk per week covering distances from 3 to 11 miles there has not been much else to report on. Due to circumstances beyond our control the late summer weekend away did not take place this year but it is hoped that it will be available next year.

The annual summer BBQ did take place with a similar amount of members attending as pre covid, the committee would like to thank Sue White for again hosting the event in her garden.

Thanks are due to Richard for his continued work as walks co-ordinator.

And a final mention for John Rust (Formally Membership Secretary) who passed away in October following a long illness. All those members who were fortunate to have known John remembered him to be a gentleman and always in good humour even during his illness. He will be sadly missed.

David Baker

HENLEY AND GORING



Another very successful year for Henley and Goring Ramblers!

We celebrated 25 years of Henley and Goring Ramblers at our annual BBQ in August, with 100 people attending and a special Celebration cake and speeches from our Chair, Alie Hagedoorn, Area Chair, Jim Parke and central Ramblers Kate Ashbrook.

Celebrating our 25th anniversary

Membership stands at 369 members, without counting affiliated members.

We have consistently provided about 25 to 30 walks each month, and all walks, short, strenuous and medium have been well attended. There were special walks, like the Jubilee walks with a picnic. The summer evening walks started from 1 April, and keep being popular. We organised the Area picnic which was attended by around 100 people from all over Oxfordshire. We kept a monthly program, but will switch to a 3 months program from 1 January. The annual Walk Leaders meeting was able to go ahead this year and valuable information and help was shared with our Walk Leaders. We have gained some new walk leaders. The number of walkers per month was slightly down in July due to the hot weather, but was around 350 for other months.

We were able to do all of our planned trips this year: Ribble valley, Howgills, Dolomites, Isle of Man and Scilly Isles.

Our AGM last year was as successful as before covid. We were able to do popular activities like the Carol Service in December, and the Chantry House lecture, although at a different time of year. We had a very successful Get walking day in Checkendon in May, and in September we had our yearly shared supper from the Pavilion at Stoke Row, as Last of the Summer Wine.

Our accounts are good with a slight deficit of £125 (we managed without a contribution from central office) and current balance of £20 on the Main Account, and a surplus of £267 and balance of £1330 on the Social Account at the end of the financial year.

Monthly enews were distributed to most members, usually about 4 to 5 pages with lots of information for our members.

The Chiltern Society path maintenance group, in which some members participate, and who we work together with regards to Path Maintenance, had 4 sessions per month, and installed many gates, and cleared many paths. Members have repeatedly told us how well our paths are maintained around here and a lot of time and work is spent by our volunteers, which is greatly appreciated.

We were also able to continue to offer the Sunday Chiltern Society walks.

We organized coach trips to the Silk Mill in Whitchurch, and to the Christmas Market in Winchester.

We organised a Games evening for the very first time, and as this was very popular, we will repeat this activity.

The winter walking weekends were able to taken up again, continuing the Hardy Way in Dorset.

We attended the Henley Show, and had a prime location and handed out many leaflets with activities organised by our group.

Alie Hagedoorn

HIKE OXFORDSHIRE

Hike Oxfordshire has had several new members joining throughout 2022 but current membership remains around just over 60. We have had a lot of interest via people joining our Meetup and Facebook groups but yet to see greater returning numbers on the walks put on.

We are still needing more walk leaders as we only have a few, and it's difficult trying to get back into having at least 1 walk a week because of this. Hopefully next year we might be able to encourage a few of the newer members to lead walks.

David and Matt put on two great weekends away earlier in the year, one to the Peak District and one to Snowdonia, the latter was opened up to the Chilterns Young Walkers, so was really nice to get to know a few of them. Later in the year (September) several of us went on a Chilterns Young Walkers weekend away to Pembrokeshire, which was very well organised and we all had a brilliant time. More weekends away are planned for 2023 (including another Peak District one, thanks David). We plan to do more with the Chiltern Young Walkers, Surrey Young Walkers and the Berkshire Ramblers next year as well.

We transferred our website over to the Ramblers platform and this has been much better to work with. We are all happy with the look of it but there are few little issues we still need to iron out

As we have now elected a new social secretary, we are looking forward to a few more outings in 2023, the first of which was a short notice Christmas meal at a local Indian restaurant in Abingdon, which was enjoyed by all that went.

Callie Rose

OXFORD CITY



At our first meeting of the year, on 11 January, we were joined by Nicky Wilson from Central Office, who talked to us about 'Growing a Group and Attracting New Members'.

This has been a preoccupation for members of the committee during the year. The group walks I led have opened my eyes to the need to engage with fellow walkers to spread the word about the benefits of walking and the crucial role that the Ramblers plays.

Thanks to our efforts to reach lapsed members and those not on email, we seem to have steadied our membership numbers. We are better placed to reach them in future.

Members of our group joined working parties with other groups during the year with the OCC installing waymarking posts and clearing paths. Another useful and rewarding activity.

A team worked for OxClean again this year which has become an annual event and raises our profile in the city among other amenity groups.

We have submitted walks for every week this year, and have lost a few and gained a few walk leaders meaning we are still short in numbers but not quality. We also ran a few longer Saturday walks this year and hope to increase their number next year.

On 6 April I attended a talk at Brookes University attended by representatives from Central Office and the OCC. This important project has received funds in the region of £1 million. Given that it is on our doorstep, I consider that there is a vital role that Oxford City and Oxfordshire Ramblers generally can play in supporting the project.

Although I shall be standing down from the committee, to whom I owe thanks for their support, I intend to remain active with the Ramblers and look forward to seeing you all on walks and path clearance parties. Our treasurer of many years, Robin Harrison, is also standing down. Thanks from all of us to Robin for his help.

Tony Dale

THAME & WHEATLEY



We have had another successful year with a slight increase in membership numbers and plenty of walking. This included walking on our annual holiday, which this year was to the HF house in Brecon, which we took over.

The photograph shows some of our group at the top of Sugar Loaf which they did on the way home

We have a good coverage of parish path wardens and our path maintenance group has been very active. With financial support from Area and also the Oxfordshire Fieldpaths Society we are arranging for some of the stiles in Stadhampton to be replaced by gates.

A course called Finding your Way was devised and run to try and attract more walk leaders. We have had some success in this but are always keen to recruit more leaders to offer a programme of walks on different days and of varying lengths.

We are encouraging members to share lifts to the starting point for walks and have set up a whatsapp group to aid this

In addition to walking we had a successful Christmas lunch together, a barn dance in the summer and a fascinating talk from the Wheatley Birds of Prey Centre with 6 birds following our AGM

Our committee has been very active and supportive in all of our activities for which the members and myself are grateful



Linda King

VALE OF WHITE HORSE

We put together two six-month **walks programmes** this year. Only publishing online has the advantage that we can fill gaps during the period. Our summer walks programme suffered cancellations from heat, Covid affecting leaders, and leader injuries but we also found replacement leaders for other walks.

Several **new leaders** have come forward this year although others have stopped or not yet restarted after Covid so we still welcome new leaders.

During this year we held an Awayday to Avebury and some linear walks involving buses neither of which we had done in the previous two years. Some people have even started going to the pub after walks! Although we held a physical AGM for a second year we haven't yet restarted social events although our walks are always friendly social events in themselves.

Membership has been stable throughout the year with a net increase of 5.

The **Vale Path Volunteers** have continued their work on paths in the Vale and beyond with 13 working parties clearing 5.5 km of path. Several of these have been joint with other groups. A fourth brushcutter operative has been trained so we have backup cover for our two brushcutters and can share the work if all are present.



On behalf of all members of the Vale Path Volunteers team I would like to acknowledge the great leadership of Jim Parke, who sadly died in December. His enthusiasm for the task and his organisation were outstanding and was recognised by the County Council. He also encouraged path maintenance teams in other groups. We shall miss him greatly.

John Gordon

WEEKEND WALKERS

During 2022, thanks to members initiatives and volunteering, we have:

1. Offered a full programme of 56 walks (mainly on Sundays) delivered by 24 walk leaders and averaging approx. 10.6 miles per walk.
2. Welcomed 5 new walk leaders who have led us on new adventures
3. Enjoyed several summer evening and Saturday walks by various leaders
4. Organised many more social events including theatre trips and disc golf near Charlbury
5. Recruited new members to the group and increased membership by 2.7% to its highest level for many years.
6. Welcomed 3 new committee members at our AGM in November 2022. Looking forward to 2023 we will have more socials planned and walking weekends away available for OxonWW members to book.



In summary for 2022, my personal thanks go to the committee, the walk leaders and all the individuals who have worked together to make the group so successful. We can all look forward to the next 12 months of walking in the Countryside of Oxfordshire and beyond.

Ian Macpherson

WEST OXFORDSHIRE

The West Oxfordshire group has continued to provide many and varied walks: in the last year there was almost one walk a week. We are particularly grateful to Matthew Savage who led 20 of them, ranging from Strenuous to Leisurely.

At the AGM, the Chair, Judith Wardle, commented on the increase in other organisations providing a range of walks, designed to keep people healthy – while some of these were initiated during the pandemic, they have continued to be popular. She mentioned a talk she attended as part of the AGM of Age UK Oxfordshire: this stressed the importance of making “age friendly” provision, given that the older population has risen 20% over recent years.

This observation led to a discussion at our own AGM about whether our group should be including in its walks programme some of the “easy” walks that have recently been put on by other local Groups: the secretary was asked to send an e-mail to members asking for volunteers to lead shorter walks, outside of the area covered by our joint walks with the Vale.

The only response has been from one person offering to discuss suitable routes starting from near Charlbury, but not actually wanting to lead walks. Judith agreed go on some of the shorter walks that other Groups are offering in, or near, West Oxfordshire.

Protests continue from would-be walkers unable to access walks information on the internet – West Oxon has pockets where both internet and phone access are difficult, as well there having been a decrease (locally and nationally) during lockdown in older people using the internet.

Membership of the Group stands at 189, 10 less than last year, but still about 20 more than before lockdown.

Judith Wardle has now been elected as the Footpath Secretary for the WO Group – having found herself recently being asked, via local social media, to lodge protests about paths near her home in North Leigh: both those not being reinstated after ploughing and others where diversions are proposed. (There is also local interest in getting ancient pathways reclaimed.)

Judith Wardle

