



RAMBLERS

Oxfordshire

OXFORDSHIRE RAMBLERS

OXFORDSHIRE RAMBLERS

ANNUAL REPORT

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 2023

FOR THE YEAR 2023



CHAIR



I have been honoured to serve as Chair of Oxfordshire Ramblers for the past year. As a Ramblers Area we perform the following functions:

- Consider planning applications that may impact on the walking environment
- Comment on the many applications to change or amend the footpaths
- Organise and train the Parish Path Wardens who monitor and report on the state of our footpaths
- Fund the equipment for the Group path maintenance teams and the training of the team members
- Organise First Aid courses for Walk Leaders and Path Maintenance Team members
- Co-ordinate the Oxfordshire Walks Programme
- Fund the replacement of stiles with kissing gates

During the past year we have held four Area Council meetings by ZOOM, organised a successful annual picnic at Shotover Country Park, held two First Aid courses, and held a Parish Path Wardens Training course.

Firstly I would like to give a massive “thank you” all the Officers of the Area Council for their support during the past year. In particular I would like to give special thanks to David Godfrey, our Area Footpath Officer, who is consulted on the many applications to change or amend the footpaths in Oxfordshire. He assesses and responds to each proposal on behalf of Ramblers. After carrying out this vital function for over forty-five years David is standing down at the AGM. In recognition of the fact that it is a demanding role we are splitting the post into two, North Oxfordshire and South Oxfordshire, and to have greater involvement of the Group Footpath Officers. We have a volunteer for North Oxfordshire but still require a volunteer for South Oxfordshire. Please consider whether you could volunteer for this post.

Secondly I would like to thank all of the volunteers on the Group Committees, the Path Maintenance Teams, the Walks Leaders and the Parish Path Wardens. These hundreds of volunteers ensure that we have a wonderful footpath network in Oxfordshire for all of our members to enjoy.

Finally I would like to thank all of you as members. Without your support we would not be able to carry out many of these tasks.

The following reports give information on the successes and challenges during the past year.

Richard Birch

SECRETARY



We welcomed a new chair after the sad death of Jim Parke on Christmas Day 2022.

This year I attended cluster groups via Central Office where problems encountered by various Areas and Groups and attracting walk leaders to keeping volunteers were discussed. I also attended two online meetings chaired by Ross Maloney where the opinion of Ramblers volunteers on the way forward was discussed, and we were shown the vision of where Ross would like to take the Ramblers into the future.

. Rosemary Williams

TREASURER

	2023	2022
	£	£
INCOME		
Funding from Ramblers	7000	4129
DLYW (Restricted)	0	200
Other	0	50
TOTAL INCOME	7000	4379
EXPENDITURE		
Group Funding	1942	2015
Walks – programmes / related / leader training	552	62
Newsletters/publicity – South East Walker	1344	1561
Campaigns/casework – PPW Workshop / Co-ordination	609	240
Practical work – Path maintenance tools / repairs	1157	1949
DLYW (Restricted)	0	18
Admin / Meetings / Other – ZOOM / Hall hire / Expenses	397	189
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	6001	6034
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	999	-1655
Opening bank balance	7249	8904
Closing bank balance	8248	7249
Designated funds (kissing gates)	1900	1000
Reserves (excluding designated)	6348	6249
Reserves (% of annual expenditure)	152%	152%

The Area's income was from the allocation of funds from the Ramblers Association.

The two kissing gates in the Stadhampton region, for which £1000 was designated for the year, have not yet been completed and the money is carried forward into next financial year. An additional £900 has been designated for two further kissing gates for the Bicester & Kidlington Group.

Our Reserves (excluding designated funds) at the end of the financial year were £6348 (Reserves percentage 152%). The Ramblers guideline is that the reserves percentage should be within the range 40% to 100% so we will aim to reduce our reserves in the 2023-24 financial year.

The Independent Examiner for Oxfordshire Ramblers Accounts for the 2022-23 financial year was Mr S A Kenner.

Dawn Pezzella

FOOTPATH SECRETARY



This will be my last Annual Report, as I will be stepping down at the AGM. At the time of writing I am still looking for a successor for the southern (Vale and South Oxfordshire) half of the county. I will continue to deal with outstanding cases where I have objected.

Committee

B&K, Vale and B&NO lack Footpath Officers. These posts need to be filled urgently. We welcome Tony Cox (Oxford) and Brian Bolton (D&W).

Hallelujah

Two paths which have been closed for years have been resolved. The bridge at Marcham BR17 at Marcham Mill is now complete, as are the steps on Sunningwell FP8 at the former Bayworth Quarry. Thanks are due to Sunningwell Parish Council for their persistence on the Sunningwell case. Another long-standing problem was Tiddington FP5/6 between the A418 and Albury, where the awkward stiles, which caused me to get my knees up to my nose to get over, have been replaced by the T&W maintenance team.

Oxfordshire County Council

The Ramblers are represented at the Monitoring Group and District Fora, which discuss strategy and important cases. Meetings have restarted post Covid. All the Field Officer posts are now filled, and an assistant may be appointed. The tasks team is also at full strength.

Definitive Map

51 cases are on the list. The backlog of applications is reduced; the oldest cases yet to be started date from 2017-8 (four cases in Dorchester). Fifteen orders have been confirmed. The Council is now working through the anomalies, mostly where paths stop short of a road.

Planning and diversions

There are 38 diversion cases on the County Council list. Six planning diversions (made by districts) and 32 OCC diversions are in progress. Two planning orders and fifteen OCC diversion orders have been confirmed this year.

Obstructions

B&NO, Vale, B&K and T&W Groups have clearance teams.

Across the county

The inquiry into Culham FP1 rail crossing was lost; the crossing is closed. I will be attending the Didcot road scheme inquiry on February 20 and the Goring Heath hearing on February 6. There are plans to close the level crossings at Tackley, Sandy Lane and Yarnton Lane. At Tackley the proposal is to divert to a bridleway along the west side of the railway; this is opposed locally, but visibility at the crossing is as poor as at Culham.

David Godfrey

MEMBERSHIP

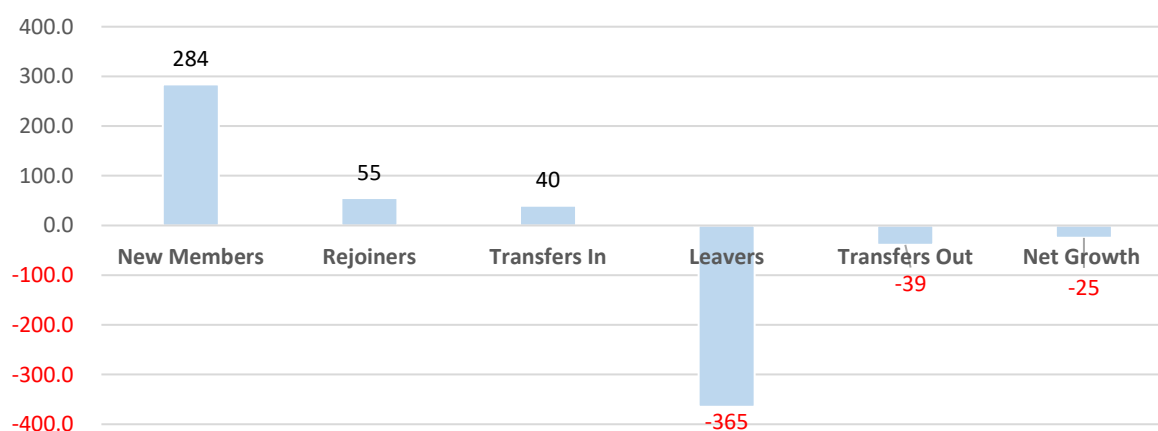
Oxfordshire Ramblers Area Membership AGM Report 2023

There appears to be a slight downward trend in membership numbers across the Oxfordshire groups, as in Table 1, (although Henley and Goring Group is the exception). The changes over 12 months are detailed in Chart 1. It is not clear if this trend is significant, and it is difficult to identify a particular cause. It could be because of the prevailing economic situation, or it is possibly a post pandemic effect i.e., there has been an increasingly wider range of activities available over this period, leading to competition for peoples' time. There is always an element of natural ebb and flow of numbers and changes are likely to be the result of a combination of factors.

Table 1. Ramblers Oxfordshire Membership by Group, September 2021 - 30 September 2023

Group	As at end September 2021	As at end September 2022	As at end September 2023	Change over last 12 mths	% Change over last 12 mths	Change over last 24 mths	% Change over last 24 mths
BNO	296	284	280	-4	-1.4	-16	-5.4
Ox	287	283	273	-10	-3.5	-14	-4.9
Vale	318	323	301	-22	-6.8	-17	-5.3
W Oxon	192	191	190	-1	-0.5	-2	-1.0
B&K	189	206	199	-7	-3.4	10	5.3
D&W	177	168	168	0	0.0	-9	-5.1
H&G	363	384	390	6	1.6	27	7.4
T&W	192	199	196	-3	-1.5	4	2.1
Hike Oxon	53	63	53	-10	-15.9	0	0.0
WW	147	151	146	-5	-3.3	-1	-0.7
Others	96	103	105	2	1.9	9	9.4
Total	2310	2355	2301	-54	-2.3	-9	-0.4

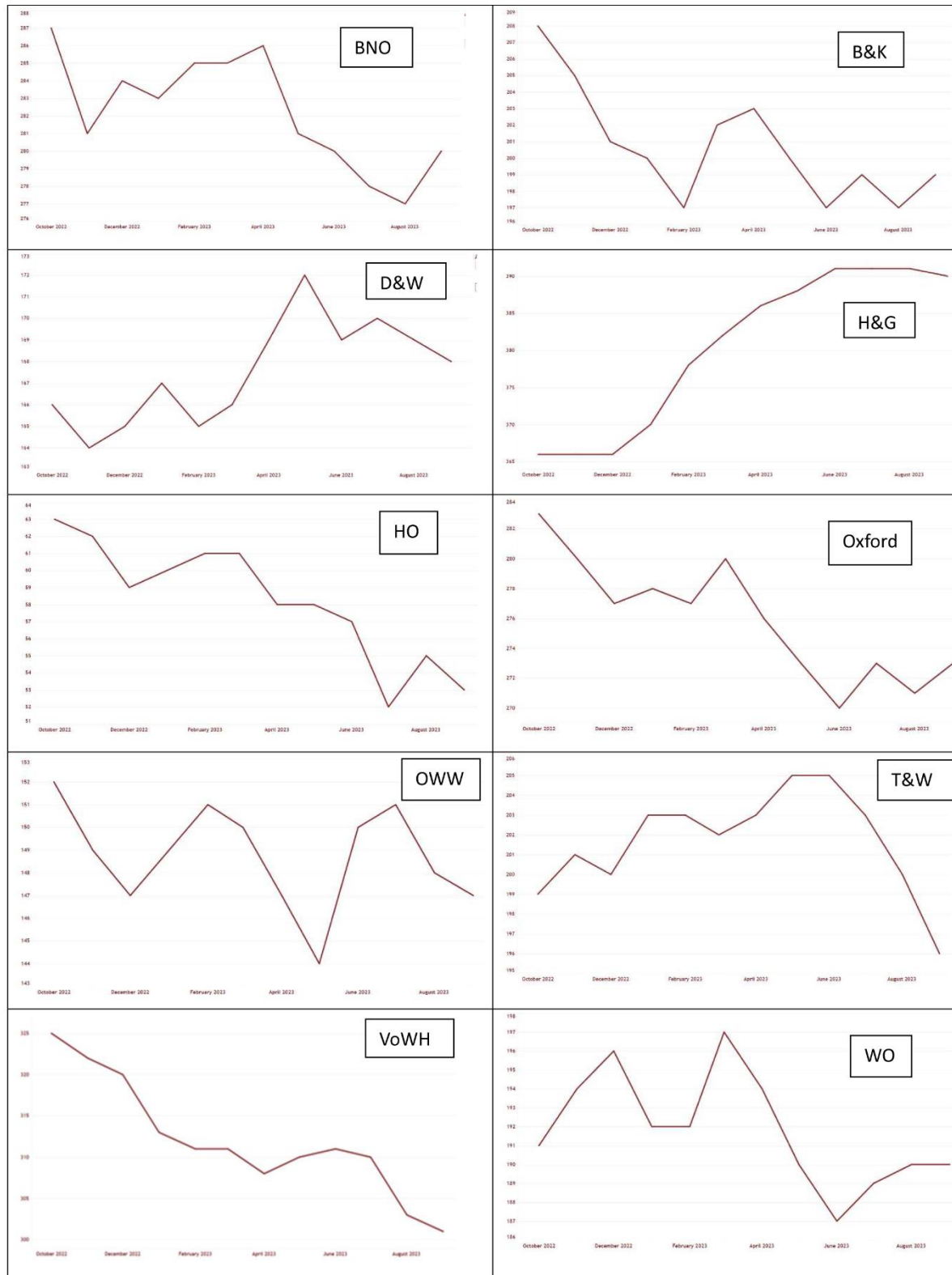
Chart 1. Membership Changes over the 12 months to 30 September 2023



The changes are relatively small and are monitored for review by Area Council at the quarterly meetings. It will be important to consider the number of new members and retention. Individual groups monitor their membership numbers and can review the need for proactive interventions such as recruitment activities as needed.

For those that are interested a graph of member changes by Group over the year is included in the appendix. (Many thanks to Richard Birch for putting this together).

Appendix 1. Member Changes over 12 months to 30 September 2023 by Group



Membership Numbers over last 12 months up to 30 September 2023

Graphs of Group membership numbers are available via [Assemble/Insight Hub/Membership/Last 12 months](#)

Wendy Mannix

PARISH PATH WARDEN NETWORK

The Parish Path Warden (PPW) scheme has continued to operate throughout the year.

Following the untimely death last Christmas of its instigator and leader Jim Parke, the role of Network Coordinator has been taken on by David Tole (D&W area) ably assisted by a team of Local Coordinators in each of the Ramblers Areas. It is very pleasing to be able to report that after several year's gap the Banbury & North Oxon Area now has a new Local Coordinator for PPWs – John Gregory – who has been a great encouragement to local PPWs.

In March 2023 we ran a training day in Wootton (near Abingdon) for Parish Path Wardens. This was attended by over 30 PPWs from all around the County along with 3 staff from OCC's Countryside Access Team and was well received by all who were there. The photos show some of us engaging in lively discussion indoors and then in action outdoors!

During 2023 we have continued to liaise closely with OCC Rights of Way staff to highlight locations where footpaths etc need some attention. PPWs have been encouraged to report issues and monitoring via the County's online reporting system CAMSWeb

<https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx> - this facility is open to all as a simple way to report matters of concern when you are out walking and I would strongly recommend its use by all Oxfordshire Ramblers.

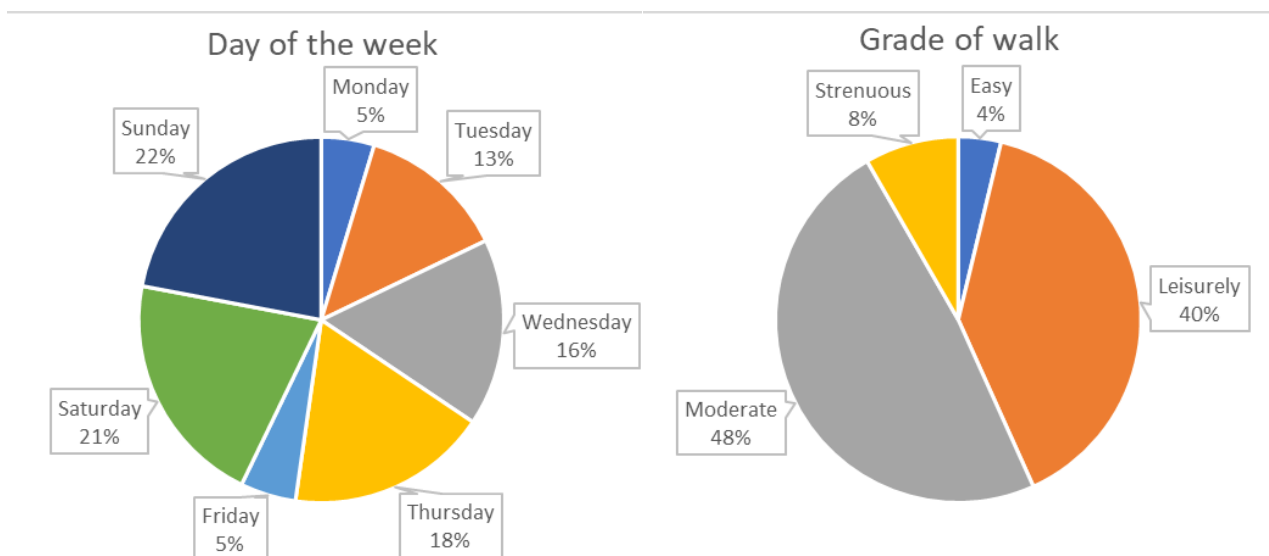
Over the last 12 months there have been the usual turnover of people volunteering to become PPWs alongside those who have decided it's time to cease being involved in this way. The current list of parishes with vacancies for PPWs is shown on the website (<https://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/footprotect/parish-path-wardens.html>) so if you feel you can help in this way, do please get in touch via the website.

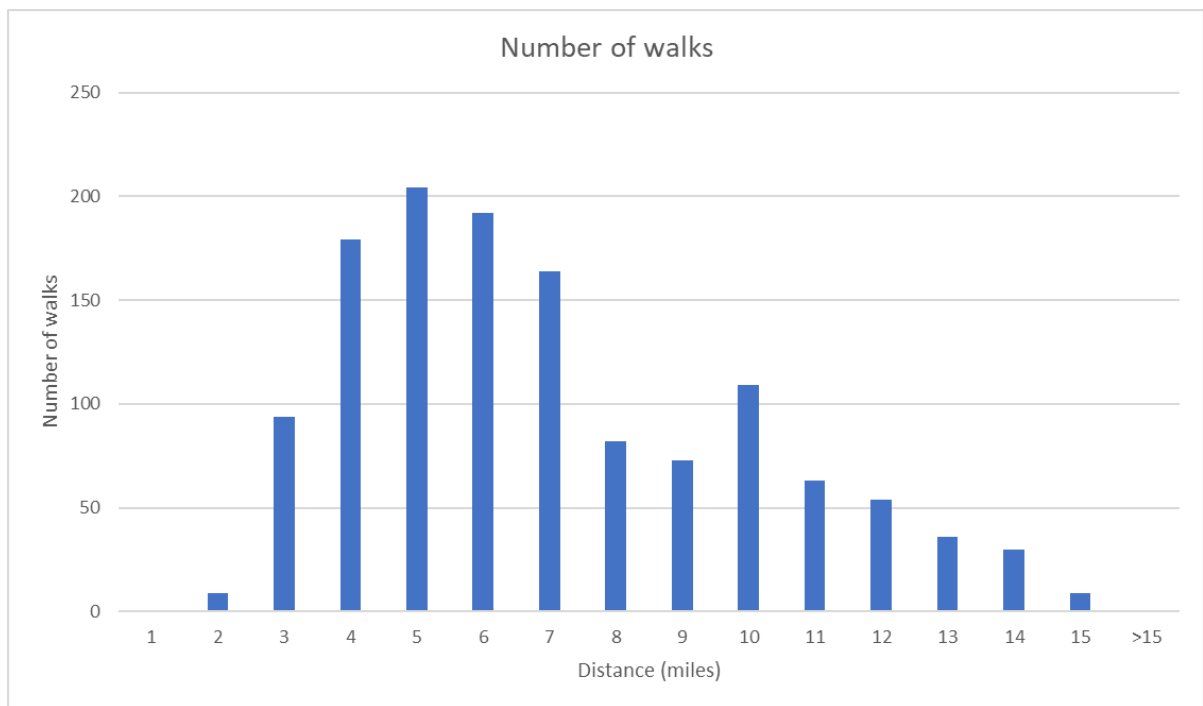
.David Tole

PUBLICITY – we currently have no publicity officer

WALKS CO-ORDINATOR

During 2023 there have been over 1300 led walks (another record) covering a total distance of 9310 miles. Distances varied from 2 miles up to 17 miles.





In December we launched a new Flexi-Group – the Oxfordshire Strollers. They have a walk every Wednesday so are also often referred to as the ‘Wednesday Walkers’. Their walks are between 4 to 5 miles and they walk at a very leisurely pace. They usually have an optional lunch afterwards at a local pub or cafe where they are often joined by past walkers from the group.

A huge thank you to all of the Group Walk Organisers and Walk Leaders that provide us with such an extensive and varied walks programme.

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 Courtney. The proposed solar near Blenheim is a major concern. It is anticipated that there will be significant objections to it.

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.

ACCESS – Nothing to report.

Terry Pollard

WEBSITE

Technical alert! We use the (Ramblers standard) Joomla package to design and support the Area website. We have now migrated the site from version 3 to version 4. The look and feel has changed, but is mostly manifest in the 'backend', which the public don't see, just our Super Users. The main work involved implementing a new 'component' to display 'galleries' of photos. Whilst the new component is easier to use, it has fewer options than the previous component - whose company went bust - and necessitated the re-loading of the appropriate groups' photos. Most of said galleries are at the top of a group's home 'page'.

I have added the new Oxfordshire Strollers to the Group menu - with a gallery. For continuity purposes, we now have three other Super Users besides myself.

Pat Lonergan

OXFORDSHIRE GROUP REPORTS

BANBURY & NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

The group has progressed well over the past year, and the activity summarised below illustrates why volunteers are so important to the running of the group and why new volunteers are always welcome. Much credit is due to the 30+ walk leaders, and committee members.

The walks programme was full throughout the year to September; we ran over 220, on our weekly schedule of Wednesday afternoons (usually leisurely), Thursday evenings (summer only), Saturday mornings (strenuous) and Sunday mornings (moderate). We also ran monthly strands: easy Friday mornings with lunch, and Sunday afternoon walks, and a few extras, especially at Christmas.

New and returning walk leaders help to freshen up the style and range of walks. We are asking members if they have new ideas for Sunday afternoons, or other suggestions.



Chacombe on a Friday walk

The national website replacement that was scheduled to be live by April 2022 continued to be delayed, until a severely deficient site was released in June 2023. This has added significantly to the walk publishing workload, while forcing the published text to be much less attractive.

Since 2021 we have produced a printable monthly list of our group's walks, approximately in the format of the Area's previous biannual booklet; these sheets are welcomed, so we expect to continue. We see fewer members of neighbouring groups attending our walks, and suspect that we attend fewer of our neighbours' walks. We believe this to be partly because we no longer have a concise summary of local walks, so would like to produce a more useful geographical summary, tailored to the individual. Whether this would be a web-based, printable, or both, is yet to be explored.

For the first time in years, the group participated in running the Parish Path Warden (PPW) network. After making contact with active PPWs, we arranged a walk with the County Council's Countryside Access representatives; this was successful and another will be arranged. We are learning who might wish to form a maintenance work party group. We continue to try to recruit PPWs for vacant parishes, and we are in constant touch with the Council.

At 1st October 2022, we had 278 members. Numbers fluctuated between 272 and 285, and by year end the total was 281.

We began with a bank balance of £705 and ended with £1,054, as Ramblers' Group Funding outweighed modest expenses. Committed expenditure for footpath improvement projects left available funds of £179.

Stuart Dyer

BICESTER & KIDLINGTON

Our main target for the year was to maintain a membership of 200+

it now stands at 204. We hope to increase the number in 2024. Our walk leaders organised many walks and events throughout the year. The average was around 20 each month.

April – Easter Bonnet walk from Lower Heyford. A good turn out and lots of lovely bonnets!

April – Bicester Market Community Stall, sadly not a lot of response on a very cold day. We will do it again but choose a warmer time of year.

May – Following the Coronation of the King and Queen we organised a Coronation walk with some interesting royal regalia. This was followed by a picnic enjoyed by all.

In June, July, and August we organised our Friday evening walks. These walks are followed by a meal in a local pub.

June – We had a recruitment stall in Tesco's foyer in Bicester. Really positive response and will do again. This was followed by a Tester Walk to attract new faces.

July – Following one of our popular Tuesday morning walks we had coffee and cakes provided by members. Well attended and will repeat again.

Sept – B&K group Picnic Walk followed by games, tombola etc. One we will repeat.

Sept – B&K holiday at Elan Valley Lodge in Powys. Twenty-six joined the holiday. We were blessed with good weather. The scenery was outstanding, and the local guides planned walks to suit all age groups. We can recommend this holiday to other groups.

Sept 2023 – We started our monthly short walks of around two miles ending up in a coffee shop. These walks are well supported, we hope to continue them next year.

Oct 2023 – Following a walk around Oxford City Centre we booked into a Crazy Golf centre in the city. Much more challenging than walking, but great fun.

Oct 2023 – Annual Halloween walk with amazing costumes.

Our AGM was held on 18th November in Fringford Village Hall. Almost forty members attended, which was the highest number for a long time. The pre-AGM speaker was Russell Thompson, who spoke about the History of the Poppy and the Poppy Appeal. A walk was organised prior to the

meeting and a "bring your own lunch" was followed by cakes, tea or coffee provided by members of the committee.

Elan Valley Holiday



Russell Thompson

BLITZ & KLEAN

Since the last AGM we have had a change of Countryside Officer for the North at Oxfordshire County Council. We first met in February 2023. Communication has improved over time.

The Blitz & Klean Team has been meeting once a month since July.

July – 10 of us cleared foot path 310/2/20 at North Aston

August – 10 of us started to clear foot path 351/10/10 at Lower Souldern

September – 8 of us completed the path at Lower Souldern. A fallen tree at Water Eaton foot path 229/4/30 was cleared by one of the team.

October – 8 of us cleared foot path 148/5/10 at Trow Pool between Bucknell and Middleton Stoney.

We have been requested to look at:-

Foot path 229/4/30 - Gosford – Water Eaton

Foot path 8/2/20 – Wendlebury

Foot path 270/10/30 – Kirtlington

Extra equipment was purchased recently due to the increase in team members working on paths (3 shears and a rake).

I have been asked by Oxfordshire County Council to pass on Thanks for the work we have undertaken. We have also had positive comments from some Land owners.

Ian Baldwin

DIDCOT & WALLINGFORD

The group has continued to offer at least 7 walks a month covering distances from 3 to 11 miles across the county though on some of these walks attendance has been low and occasionally non-existent.

The Summer Evening BBQ was a great success with a similar number attending as in previous years.

As last year the Late summer weekend away did not take place and due to lack of interest there are currently no plans for any to be held in the future.

In early September a memorial walk for John Rust (Group Membership Secretary and Walk Leader) took place in the Cholsey

The Group AGM was held on the 18TH November at East Hagbourne. Though a low turnout we managed to elect 8 officer posts shared amongst 5 members.

David Baker

HENLEY AND GORING

Our group has excelled this year with a full program of walks and activities. Some highlights:

- We offered almost 30 walks each month. Wednesday is most popular.
- Walks have a good variety of lengths, with regular short walks on Wednesdays and strenuous walks on Thursdays, and many other walks.
- We provided summer evening pub walks from early April to middle of September
- We supplemented local walks with walking long distance paths. We completed the Hardy Way, and have almost completed The Capital Ring.
- We provided 8 social activities, with the biggest ones being our annual AGM dinner in November and the BBQ in August, well attended by around 80 people, as well as our May Bank holiday Get walking day, Chantry House Lecture, Christmas Carol walk, Games evening.

- We organized 6 walking holidays, of which 2 abroad. The holidays are extremely popular: on the Dartmoor trip we had 45 participants. Apart from Dartmoor, we went to the Peak District, Brecon Beacons, Chamonix, Morocco and Emsworth. We also introduced "Short walks with sightseeing" as a third choice of walks on many of the trips.



1Photo by Jill Cole

- We organized an away day to see the Bath Christmas lights.
- Every month we produce lively newsletters informing our members about upcoming activities and looking back at what we did. We also post regularly on Facebook.
- Membership continues to grow steadily, and we now have 391 members.
- Our path network keeps being well protected and is well maintained by our group working together with the South Chiltern Path Maintenance Volunteers.
- Several people have joined the group of walk leaders, now a total of 32.

Looking ahead to the coming year we aim to keep offering a full programme and hope to offer a new long distance walk, the St James Way. For the winter walking we are reducing costs of our weekends away and have started the John Bunyan Way. Planning for the winter next year, we hope to offer 2 different choices, a "short walks" long distance path, and a "long walks" long distance path. Our walking trips for next year include Llangollen, Ribble Valley, Arncliffe, Jersey and Romania. We also hope to be present at the Henley Show next year.

Alie Hagedoorn

HIKE OXFORDSHIRE

'Another quiet year for the HO group with little gain in new members and more long standing members dropping off. Very few walks have been led over the year but one new member Regen did put on his first walk in October and is leading another in the new year.

Callie and Matt stepped down from their roles on the committee and David Homer has taken over as chair, membership secretary and walks co-ordinator, and hopes to try and re-generate the group over the next few months.'

Callie Rose

OXFORD CITY

It has been an eventful year for the Oxford Group.

In February we joined the annual litter pick which took place in Botley. In June Oxford group hosted the Summer Picnic which took place in the hottest day of the year, though those who joined the picnic were refreshed with homemade elderflower cordial.

The Wednesday group have continued to offer walks on Wednesday, and walks have been offered on different days of the week.

The Wednesday group decided to form their own flexigroup which is called the Oxford Strollers as very few of the group belong to the Oxford group and live in various parts of the County.

The Group AGM was held on the 4TH November in Oxford. Though a low turnout we managed to elect 7 officer posts shared amongst 4 members.

We have new challenges for the new committee in building up the group in 2024 and would like to encourage more walk leaders to submit walks.

Rosemary Williams

THAME & WHEATLEY

.Our committee has been active this year and supported by many of our members who volunteer in a variety of ways. This has meant a busy and interesting year

Efforts to increase membership has involved an introductory walking day, a talk to local Ukrainians and head office have, for the second year, organised and run a stall at Thame Food Festival. We have had a steady trickle of new members through the year and with some leavers have managed to maintain our numbers



Our walks have been spread over various days of the week and are generally well supported. This seems to be particularly so if cake eating is involved. We have for instance walked to Fingest and had cake to help raise funds for the church there, and also undertook two walks with some of the Fijian diaspora to help raise funds for a church in Fiji. This year we have introduced some regular super short walks of up to 2.5 miles with lunch or coffee or sometimes both involved. These have been very popular and we plan to continue with them

In addition to our regular walking our programme we have continued our pattern of other events. These are our Christmas lunch, summer social and annual holiday. This year we went to Buxton, and although we had a lot of rain, we nevertheless had 3 walks a day and a great time.

Our footpath maintenance team has been very active this year. In addition to the normal chopping and slashing the group has expanded what it can do. They have mended

some unstable stiles this year and installed their first gate. We are hoping to do more of this as our area seems to have plenty of stiles, some broken down or difficult to get over even for the most agile

We're optimistic for our group in the future and looking forwards to an active 2024



Before and after the path maintenance team cleared the stile

Linda King

VALE OF WHITE HORSE

We have organised three led-walks most weeks in the past year. We work well as a team with 10% of walks having a different leader than originally planned. When a leader's availability changes, someone else steps up. We have fewer leaders than previously so would welcome anyone wishing to lead walks for the group. We have kept up the number of walks by the remaining leaders leading more often and I am impressed that our leaders find so many new routes. Our original plan was to have two six-month programmes per year, like when we had paper programmes, but we have not always managed to populate the second three months fully. Publishing online gives us flexibility to submit walks at any time so we usually complete the schedule for months four to six as we reach month three.

This year's **Awayday** was to Coaley Peak, a site overlooking the Severn and Wales that we first visited in 2014. The event was postponed from July to September due to bad weather.

The group walked the **Ridgeway** on eight days spread over the summer. We chose this year as it is the 50th Anniversary of the Ridgeway as a National Trail.

In April, we took part in the first **Abingdon Walking Festival**. Vale Group (with D&W) provided most of the walks and had a stand in the Market Place. There 85 walkers on the five walks. Most of them were not members so we got good visibility with the public.

Membership has dropped off in the second half of the year. It's unclear whether this is due to cost of living or whether we don't meet people's needs..

The **Vale Path Volunteers** have continued their work on paths in the Vale holding 20 work sessions, clearing 7km of vegetation with 511 hours of volunteer work. The group has 27 of VPV volunteers while the average attendance per session is 7 (Max 12 min 3).

Pre designation of the first Monday and third Wednesday of the month for our sessions, with the occasional ad hoc Flying Squads, appears to be working well.

Over the summer several small groups of the VPV have surveyed the whole of the Vale Way, 27 miles from Abingdon to Longcot, in five sessions. We cut back vegetation, especially from stiles and footbridges, added new waymarks and Vale Way decals.

Finally, we all miss Jim Parke who passed away last Christmas. He started the Vale Path Volunteers and, with Susan Maguire, set up the county-wide Parish Path Warden scheme. Always stepping up to a challenge, he contributed so much.

John Gordon

WEEKEND WALKERS

Year of Adventures: In the stride of 2023, Oxon Weekend Walkers extends heartfelt appreciation to our members for their initiatives and volunteering efforts. Together, we navigated a journey marked by exciting initiatives and memorable moments.



Walks Galore: Our dedicated members ensured a vibrant calendar, offering a full programme of walks nearly every Sunday. The addition of new walk leaders brought fresh perspectives, leading us on invigorating adventures and expanding the variety of walks available. Summer evenings were adorned with special walks led by various enthusiasts, creating delightful memories along the way.

Beyond the Trails: Oxon Weekend Walkers shared a delightful summer picnic with our friends from the "Hike Oxfordshire" 20/30s group. Additionally, we ventured beyond our usual paths, offering walking holidays in the scenic landscapes of Cardigan Bay

and the Elan Valley.

Social Extravaganza: The OxonWW community flourished not only on trails but also in vibrant social gatherings. Theatre trips, music concerts, outdoor theatre, a summer music festival, and lively Ska music dance nights added a rhythmic beat to our social calendar.

Stepping into the Future: As we stride into 2024, Oxon Weekend Walkers anticipates more socials and exciting weekends away for our members to relish. While bidding farewell to a remarkable year, I extend sincere gratitude to the committee, walk leaders, and all individuals who contributed to our success. After four rewarding years as Chair, I pass the baton to a new leader and a full committee. The next 12 months promise more enchanting walks in the heart of Oxfordshire and beyond. Cheers to the trails that await us!

Ian Macpherson

WEST OXFORDSHIRE

The membership of WO remains stable at around 190 (192 reported to the AGM in November). We do not know how many are active walkers, because we don't hear if they are regularly walking with other groups, and of course, there are no records kept of attendance (some figures could have been kept when walkers were booking during lock-down). In terms of engagement by members: Catherine Eddy, Membership Secretary, wrote to every member not on e-mail when the Walks Booklet was discontinued, asking if they wanted to stay in touch. A few supplied e-mail addresses, and a few said they had remained members to support the aims of the main organisation but didn't need regular contact.

It is difficult for us to keep a precise figure for the number of walks hosted by WO because of some of them being joint with the Vale. But we do know that the number has increased: there are particularly more "leisurely" walks. In general, the total is about 5 a month.



As a result of reading the new national draft Strategy, we are exploring copying an idea from Surrey of offering walks to refugees. Judith (Chair) already knows people from Oxfordshire's Asylum Welcome and has made an initial contact – there is also a support group in Witney. Of course, we recognised that there could be language barriers or a lack of suitable clothing, or they just might not like the idea – so this is being approached with caution.

Footnote: we have the impression that this year more walks than before have had to be cancelled or substantially revised because of flooding, paths become dangerous because of

the amount of mud (especially paths with an official name e.g. the Oxfordshire Way), and major storms.

One of the walks that had to be changed was the pre-AGM walk: avoiding the flooded Evenlode, we walked round Blenheim. We had excellent weather: photo taken while lunching on a bench in Combe opposite the Reading Room where we hold our AGMs.

Judith Wardle

