

OXFORDSHIRE RAMBLERS ANNUAL REVIEW 2017



CHAIR

"We're an association of people and groups who come together to both enjoy walking and other outdoor pursuits and also to ensure that we protect and expand the infrastructure and places people go walking." During 2017 we Ramblers in Oxfordshire addressed the whole of this spectrum of core objectives, taking our activities to new heights.

Our several path maintenance teams continued to cut back vegetation on numerous paths, in productive collaboration with the Countryside Access Service of the County Council. Our network of parish path wardens has gone from strength to strength, with over 80% of parishes having one, whilst our footpath officers engaged with the County and District councils on proposed footpath diversions and planning applications that affected public rights of way.

2017 was a bumper year for our led walks: 1,013. Also on the up was our membership, which has increased in each of the last three years (up 6.4% in that period) to 2,237. An increasing membership is important in two respects. Firstly, it means that we are spreading the joy of walking to more people. Secondly, more subscriptions means more money for Ramblers to pursue its charitable objectives for the good of all. Our success is testament to the work done by all volunteers in our 10 groups. Increasing membership is not only about recruitment; it is also about retention. A number of our groups have achieved double-digit increases. These stem from their initiatives to extend the scope of their led walks (e.g. length, frequency, day, time of day) or the frequency and quality of their social activities, or both. We learn from each other, sharing our experiences during meetings of our Oxfordshire Area Council, in articles in South East Walker, on our Facebook sites – and when we are out walking.

You will find more flesh on the bone in the reports below. Whether you walk with Ramblers or just do your own thing, thank you for supporting our great charity.

SECRETARY

Having completed my 5th year as secretary I have found that the introduction of the new website and Facebook very important in informing both members and potential members of what the Oxfordshire Ramblers Offer. We also continue to distribute email newsletters keeping our members informed of activities originating from the Area.

Groups personalise the newsletter themselves which is proving a very useful way of keeping in touch.

In February 2018 there will be another opportunity to attend a first aid course for walkers organised by St John's ambulance.

Rosemary Williams



TREASURER

These accounts are prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the Ramblers Association.

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

Routine expenditure included the production of the twice-yearly walks programme booklet and the allocation of funds to the ten Oxfordshire Ramblers Groups.

During 2016-17 Oxfordshire Area organised a stand, on behalf of Ramblers, at the Countryfile Live at Blenheim Palace. The cost of £1,254 is included under the 'Newsletters/publicity' category.

The Reserves on 30 September 2017 were £7,446. Services to the value of £968, received in 2016-17, were not invoiced before the end of the financial year and are shown as 'Designated Expenditure for next year 2017-18. Our Reserves, expressed as a percentage of the annual expenditure (excluding Group Allocations), were 82%. The Ramblers Association guidelines are that the Reserves should be between 40% and 100% of annual expenditure.

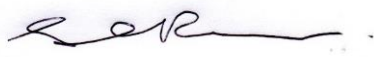
Income & Expenditure for the year ended 30 September 2017

	<u>2017</u> <u>£</u>	<u>2016</u> <u>£</u>
INCOME		
Allocation from Ramblers		
National Fund	11975	12080
Walks Programme Advertising	235	370
Bank Interest	0	7
Fundraising	0	95
Other	5	0
TOTAL INCOME	<u>12215</u>	<u>12552</u>
EXPENSES		
Group Allocations	2585	2952
Walks programmes	3337	4501
Walks related	0	0
Walks leader training	532	432
Newsletters/publicity	2787	1552
Publication/goods costs	0	0
Campaigns/casework	494	619
Practical work	224	1753
Fundraising costs	0	0
Meetings (inc. AGM)	26	197
Admin	735	829
Other	0	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>10721</u>	<u>12835</u>
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	1494	-283
Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2017		
ASSETS		
Bank Balance	<u>8414</u>	<u>6920</u>
RESERVES		
General Fund brought forward	6920	7203
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	1494	-283
Designated Expenditure 2017-18	-968	
TOTAL RESERVES	<u>7446</u>	<u>6920</u>
Reserves (% of annual expenditure)*	82%	70%

* annual expenditure excludes Group Allocations (a change to the accounting rules in 2016-17)

Independent Examiner's Report

I have examined these Accounts and the underlying records in accordance with the Area and Group Independent Examination Guidelines. I consider that the Oxfordshire Area Accounts have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year ended 30 September 2017.

Signed 
Mr S A Kenner
Date 19th October 2017

Richard Birch

FOOTPATH SECRETARY

Committee

West Oxfordshire, BNO and D&W groups have no Footpath Officer. In some cases this can mean that I have to do a 50-mile round trip to look at diversion proposals. Derek Fisher has replaced Christine Tulloch as Footpath Officer for B&K; we thank her for her work.

Oxfordshire County Council

The Monitoring Group met in April and October. The Countryside Service has had been reorganised so that the field officers are isolated in country offices, with the core staff located in a hub in Speedwell Street. The team has also been split into North and South.

Definitive Map claims

There are 97 claims outstanding, with a backlog of at least ten years. The 32 claims made by the Trail Riders' Fellowship to upgrade restricted byways to byways open to all traffic (i.e. motor vehicles) will be dealt with en bloc (in any case some of them must fail because they include Enclosure Award bridleways). We have one person who is looking at lost ways near Witney; she has so far made six claims.



Planning and diversions

The development of **Great Western Park, Didcot** continues with the accompanying stream of diversions. I objected to diversions of **Kennington FP4** over the railway and **Thame FP13** because they had the grid references SU instead of SP, which put the paths somewhere near the Isle of Wight; both were re-issued soon after with correct references. I have also objected to a diversion of **Eynsham FP30** beyond the former Countryside Service offices as it puts the path through a flood-plain “for the safety of pedestrians”.

The dedication at **Oratory School, Woodcote** has at last been signed, after much shoving by OCC.

Obstructions, etc.

North Aston BR7 (probably mediaeval and maybe pre-Domesday) is still closed to horses because the culvert has holes in it. The closure of **Sunningwell FP8** through the former quarry has been extended.

I had a strange experience along **Sansom's Lane** near Woodstock during the summer. After lugging a couple of small trees out of the way during a recce, I returned a few days later to take photos of the remaining fallen trees and report their position. I then logged everything on CAMSWEB (OCC's reporting system) – only to have the reports immediately rejected. It transpired that the Tasks Team were clearing another part of the same path while I was taking photos, and after I left they were alerted to the fallen trees by a dog walker, and cleared them too, since they were already on site. This shows the value of having an in-house Tasks Team; contractors would probably not have been as flexible.



Thanks

Finally, my thanks to the footpath officers and clearance teams for their hard work, and to anyone else who has helped with footpath matters, and all those whose secateurs and other tools have helped to keep paths open.

David Godfrey

MEMBERSHIP

Ramblers Oxfordshire - Membership report for year to September 2017

	Sep-17	Sep-16	Sep-15	Sep-14	% Increase over 12 months	% Increase over 24 months	% Increase over 36 months
BNO	281	268	280	254	4.9	0.4	10.6
B&K	190	179	164	167	6.1	15.9	13.8
D&W	158	161	160	167	-1.9	-1.3	-5.4
H&G	318	306	304	312	3.9	4.6	1.9
OX	305	303	313	319	0.7	-2.6	-4.4
T&W	171	153	155	140	11.8	10.3	22.1
Vale	325	324	319	322	0.3	1.9	0.9
Woxon	169	163	152	159	3.7	11.2	6.3
WW	160	149	141	136	7.4	13.5	17.6
20&30	75	76	92	91	-1.3	-18.5	-17.6
Unallocated	85	63	60	35	34.9	41.7	142.9
	2,237	2145	2140	2,102	4.3	4.5	6.4

Membership shows a healthy increase over the last 12 months, the best performing groups being Thame & Wheatley, The Weekend Walkers and Bicester & Kidlington As Area Membership Secretary I take no credit for the increase in "Unallocated" Members, we endeavour to get all new members in this category to join a group.

Peter Stone

PARISH PATH WARDEN CO-ORDINATOR



1. There has been no change in the team of Local Coordinators during the year.



2. Recruitment of PPWs concentrated on Vale of White Horse Rambler Group Area with the appointment of 9 new recruits. There have been resignations of some PPWs. Vacancies are notified to Parish Clerks requesting them to put up recruitment posters on notice boards. Recruitment for the year 2018 will concentrate on West Oxfordshire.

3. Current PPW statistics, including Chiltern Society Path Representatives and Cotswold Wardens are 206 PPWs, 34 Chiltern Society, and 23 Cotswold Wardens.

Around 82% of the county's 320 Parishes are now covered.

4. A PPW workshop took place in March 2017 at Upper Heyford, attended by 17 PPWs. Thanks to Sarah Aldous, Jackie Smith, Dave Cavanagh and Marion Ganthony, Local Coordinator Bicester & Kidlington, for their assistance.
5. ID/PPW Authorisation cards have been sent to around 40 PPWs who requested one. Thanks to Paul Harris for processing the cards.
6. CAMSweb reporting system seems to have been taken on board by most PPWs.
7. An article on PPWs in Oxfordshire has been included in every edition of South East Walker.
8. Ramblers Central Office received regular updates of master lists of PPWs for insurance purposes.
9. Oxfordshire Area ramblers have a Facebook page which contains regular items of news on PPW activities.



10. I wish to express my particular thanks to the 12 PPW Local Coordinators for their support in looking after their teams in the Rambler Group areas, viz. Peter Offord, Banbury & North Oxfordshire; Marion Ganthony, Bicester & Kidlington; Keith Frayn, City of Oxford; Tony Clark, Ken King and Bob Ward, Thame & Wheatley; David Seed & Daryl Dixon, Didcot & Wallingford; Dave Cavanagh, John Graham & John Orchard, Vale of White Horse; & Rosemary Clegg, West Oxfordshire.

11. My thanks to Adam McQueen for sending to me the twice-yearly lists of path problems in the parishes for distribution via LCs to their PPW teams.

Jim Parke

PUBLICITY

Most of my activity this year has been in helping to plan our participation in the Countryfile Live show in the grounds of Blenheim Palace between 3rd- 6th August 2017 inclusive.

This developed into a county-wide public relations exercise in which most of our groups were represented and is also the first national show we have ever staged. We showed ourselves to the general public, answered questions and tried to dispel erroneous myths about the Ramblers. We explained that if it were not for the Ramblers, many of the footpaths they currently enjoy walking with their family and friends would not be available or passable without our work-parties being out there clearing the way and stopping them from being closed. I got the impression that many of them were not aware of our efforts. We got lots of good publicity from it including a broadcast interview on Radio Oxford.

Note: Countryfile Live TV programme is watched by something like six million people each week and they are often suggesting that people 'get out there' and join the Ramblers. The show itself logged 120,226 visitors this year of whom well over a thousand of them visited our display.

Roy Clements

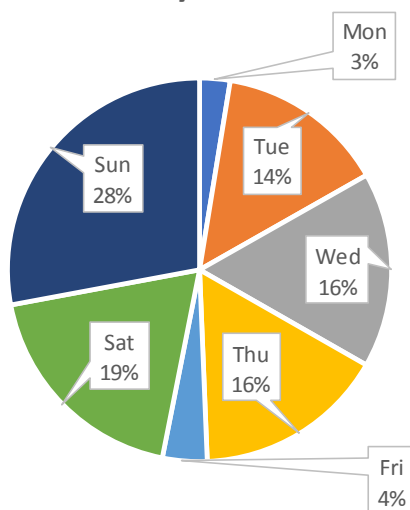
WALKS CO-ORDINATOR

For the period 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017 Oxfordshire Area has produced a varied programme of 1,013 led walks. The walks vary in distance between 1 and 17 miles, covering a total of 7,079 miles, with 47% of the walks at the weekend. Approximately half (53%) of the walks were 'Moderate' but over the past few years there has been an increase in other grades of walks.

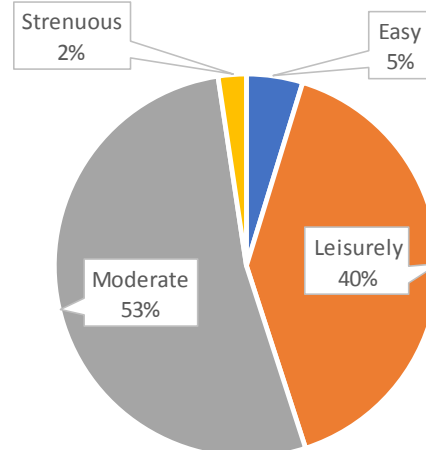
Two Walks Programme booklets, each covering 6 months, have been produced. The net cost of publishing and distributing 3900 walks booklets was £4,305 (£1.10 per booklet). Included with the Walks Programmes were Newsletters from Vale of White Horse, Henley & Goring, and Thame & Wheatley Groups.

The walks have also been uploaded onto Google Calendar and Ramblers Walks Finder.

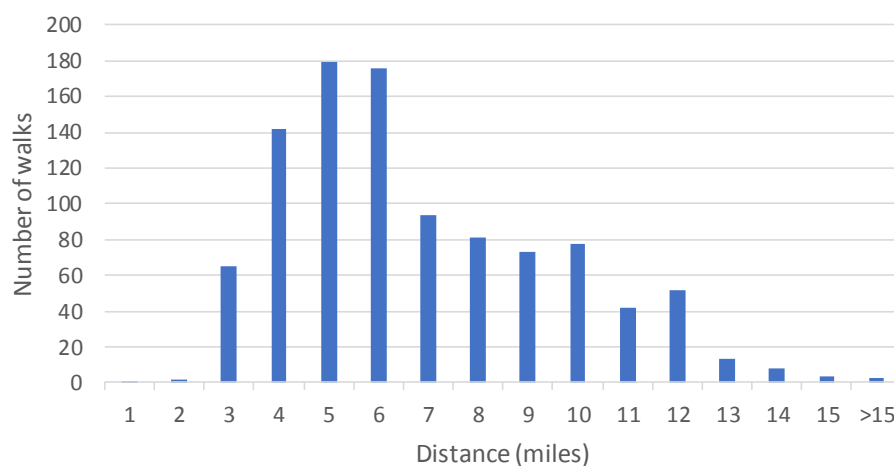
Walks - Days of the week



Grade of Walk



Number of walks



Richard Birch

GROUP REPORTS

20s & 30s



Since the AGM in November 2016 we have had a good variety of walks (58) and socials (13) as well as some excellent weekends away (3) with some innovative ideas. We went to the Lake District where we walked in the snow. In Yorkshire we had some more relaxed walks as well as separately completing 50 miles of walking over the weekend.

We have got more involved with the other Ramblers groups, coordinating the Oxfordshire Ramblers picnic for the first time to great success near Banbury. We participated in the Ramblers first

involvement with BBC CountryFile Live.

Next year David and Gareth are planning to organise weekends away for the first time, which should mean we have more than enough weekend away organisers for the first time! We also plan to redo the website and to publish the posters we have had professionally designed.

My thanks to Andrew and Laura for coordinating the walks and the socials, respectively. My thanks to David and Rachel for leading walks for the first time, Rob for leading the most walks and Luke for breaking the ice and leading socials without being directly involved.

Matthew Hutton

BANBURY & NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

BNO membership increased by 26 in 2015 and has stayed at around 280 since then, which means that recruitment is keeping pace with the loss of, mainly older, members. This is mainly due to the efforts of our publicity officer, to the range of walks we offer and to our 30 walk leaders, newly equipped with first aid packs (including thermal blankets and tick removers), and to the warm welcome they extend to all members.

Our publicity officer effectively advertises locally: in newspapers, public spaces (eg: museums and libraries) and by taking stalls at local shows/events .

Our latest walks were added in response to perceived needs. It was noted that:

- the Health walks-format of the same start point and time with the object of keeping fit worked for busy people and health walkers wanting to move on.
- Older walkers wanted slower, shorter walks with a social focus.
- Members wanted to walk with friends over the Christmas holidays.

All our walks, including the popular Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday walks, and the minibus trips have added-value, for example: tea and cakes, pub stops, meals, visits to places of interest.

We continue to keep our footpaths accessible:

- Two footpaths cleared.
- A blocked path and two faulty stiles referred to the Country Access Team.
- Stile on Adderbury 23 was reported by the PPW as suitable for replacement by a gate and the process has been initiated.

We continue to work hard to retain the members we have and to attract new ones.

Mary Thomas/Peter Offord

BICESTER & KIDLINGTON

Bicester & Kidlington members have enjoyed another good year. Thank you to the Committee for all their hard work in making this possible. Our membership has increased by 5% to 187. There are 12 payments pending so we could increase by 11%.

Throughout the year we have continued to provide a varied walks programme. Thank you to Richard and our walk leaders. The walks generally take place at weekends with short walks every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month.



Some of the highlights included

- Lionel's Mince Pie Walk
- London Christmas Lights walk,
- Mary's dawn walk in April which was very popular and many of the walkers enjoyed a hearty breakfast afterwards.
- Barbara's Bluebell Walk
- Walk around London's legal district

We introduced a new walk called "Steam & Cream", which involved a 5-mile walk around Chinnor followed by a cream tea on the Chinnor & Princess Risborough Railway.



Chinnor & Princess Risborough Railway

We organised three coach outings: - Two to Winchester where some of us climbed up St Catherine's Hill and then explored the city. The other to Salisbury where we walked to Old Sarum and back.

In May, a small group of us went to the Lake District in May and climbed both Cat Bells and Scafell Pike.

Some of us went to The Wye Valley in October for a long weekend. We enjoyed some beautiful walks in the area.



Group overlooking Wye Valley

Other social events include, Cotswold Store open evening and pub lunches every other month.

As part of the "Growing Healthy Bicester" campaign Cherweell District Council gave us a grant through Spark funding to reprint our book "Short Walks Around Bicester". Sales have gone well and we are looking towards another reprint.

Some of us went to the Ramblers' volunteer development day in Newbury. It was an opportunity to learn more about the work of Ramblers and the chance to network with other groups. These days are a lot of fun and open to all.

Congratulations to our Secretary, Andrew, who won a Ramblers Holiday in the raffle that was organised by our AGM speaker from Ramblers' Holidays.

Our AGM was memorable. After a short walk we were treated to a Asian food lunch provided by Elisa and her friends. It was followed by a talk on wine making with tasters; this set the mood for the actual meeting. Mary received a commendation for services to Ramblers.

We look forward to our London Lights walk and Mince Pie walk in December and many more interesting walks and events next year. Next September we have planned a weekend away to Exmoor.

If you have any ideas for future walks or events, please let us know?

Mary Gough

BLITZ & KLEAN

Blitz and Clean, purchased a few tools for The Vale (Jim Parke) BNO (Stuart Dyer) and ourselves. These tools were loppers and pruning saws. EP Barrus of Bicester allowed an attractive discount.



Our clearing objectives started with Piddington 1 (pictured left) from there we moved to Rayford Lane (Barton Gate) this was one of the toughest job so far, a small tree had blocked the bridge which was hand sawn and removed.

Two large bramble bushes were also removed and disposed of with a mulching blade on the brush cutter.

Three footpaths were cleared of high vegetation at Cottisford.



Bob, Ian, and Stuart made short work of a few saplings which had blown over in the recent storms.

See adjacent photos



Footpaths at Souldern were once again cleared.

Jim Parke, contacted me about a venture that included Barton Scout group so a warm evening of June, we all met at Sandford St Martin.

The scout group was supervised by Joanne Miles which totalled twenty boys all eager to starting lopping.

Risk assessments had been submitted by the scout group. A short talk was given by me regarding the use of loppers and secateurs. All fingers and toes were accounted for at the end of the evening!



Blackthorn 7 pictured above (before and after) was the next venue which involved moving builder's rubble which had been dumped on the footpath. (moved by the use of plastic bags and taken to landfill.) Time consuming to say the least.

Mike Sargeant

DIDCOT & WALLINGFORD

Following last year's AGM we made a booking to go away to Warners Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight, in September 2017. 2017 was the 20th Anniversary of our group, as well as H&G and T&W, forming. In April, a meal was held for committee and ex-committee members from all 3 groups at The Fox and Hounds in Christmas Common. About 30 of us had a lovely meal and shared memories.



Above photos of the trip to the IOW

In June, Richard Birch led our walk to the Area Picnic at Broughton Castle. Our main 20th Anniversary celebration was a day of walks based at Crowmarsh Gifford Village Hall. All 3 groups were involved and about 70 people took part.

We were delighted to be joined by Des Garrahan, Chair of Trustees, for the day. 24 of us attended the weekend away where we were once again lucky with the weather and fantastically well looked after at the hotel. 21 members have already committed to going away to HF Dovedale in September 2018, as priority booking seems necessary for a group of this size. At the AGM Barry Cowlard stood down after 5 years service, and John Rust was voted in to replace him.

Nick Morley

HENLEY AND GORING

In 2016/17 we organised 187 (up 50% from 2012/13) walks with on average 11.4 participants. We walked in total 14,140 miles (over half the earth's circumference) or, more than 32 million steps have been taken by the Henley and Goring Ramblers. We had a broad selection of walks of various distances. The overall increase in walks this year was mainly caused by a boost in the shorter walks. We have a good participation on walks. Walks between 10 and 12 miles have an increased participation from earlier years. We organise most walks on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesday, complemented with Friday pub walks in the summer.

We introduced 3 walks with mobility scooters, following the vision of the Ramblers to help everybody "finding their feet" regardless of age, mobility and background. Next year we hope to expand the programme with family walks and more short walks on Sundays.

Our membership has slightly increased with 15 members since last year and is now 335, of which 169 are individual and 166 are joint members.

We organised walking trips to Wales, the Wye Valley, Sicily, Northumberland, Norway, the Quantocks and Malverns. There was an average of 23 persons on the trips and 70 people



participated in total. The maximum on a trip was 30 people. For next year all trips are well booked; we visit the Isle of Wight, Northern Cyprus, Austria, Elan Valley in Wales and Upper Teesdale in Yorkshire.

Our Winter Walking in

2016/17 saw us completing the Wyche Way and we started the Mid-Wilts Way for 2017/18 with about 20 walkers.

On Tuesdays we completed the Chiltern Heritage Walk, and have done 2 stages of the West Berks Perimeter walk.

We supported the Chiltern Walking Festival in May and September with about 10 walks. Most attendees were Ramblers members but there were a few who joined via the festival.

Our social committee organised 7 events, with on average 47 participants (against 44 last year). Best visited was the Chantry House Lecture (61 participants). The others were AGM, BBQ, May bank holiday event with tea & cakes, Carol Service, Walk Leaders meeting and Christmas dinner.

We supported the Area with volunteers at the Countryfile show. We will repeat the Christmas Market in Henley. To attract new members, we distributed 800 short walk leaflets and posters over our area. We published walks on Facebook and in 6 papers/magazines, most used is the weekly Henley Standard. We produced electronic newsletters for our members monthly, as well as 2 printed newsletters per annum.

Paths keep being well maintained with the Chiltern Society following up on reported issues.

Our Ramblers Income and Expenditure had a surplus of £61. All designated funds were used. Our bank balance 30/9 was £143. The main expenditure was printing of newsletters and walk programmes. Our social account remained approximately the same with a balance of £1150
1

Our committee currently consist of 9 people, with a vacancy for a publicity officer.

Alie Hagedoorn

OXFORD CITY

- We have enjoyed a year's worth of a full programme of walks nearly every Wednesday far and wide, as a result of our energetic Walks Organiser, Wendy Thomas. Thanks to all the leaders.



Photos of some of the walks

- At the AGM, we welcomed Tony Dale, our Footpath Officer, back from his sabbatical. We thank Keith Frayn for being his very able Deputy. Keith will remain on the Committee as Path Wardens' Coordinator.
- Robin Harrison, Treasurer, has purchased a useful range of tools for use by Path Wardens. Robin has produced a report on his work on the Jubilee Way and has posted it with a good map both of which are available on the Ramblers website.
- Siobhan Stead-Ellis organised volunteers for the OxClean litter picking event in March which has now expanded from Oxford to be a national initiative.
- The Oxford Group led a walk to the Annual Area Summer Picnic on June 25th where eight of the nine Oxfordshire Groups gathered at Broughton Castle.
- Volunteers from the Oxford Group attended the Countryfile event at Blenheim on Saturday 5th August.
- The Oxford group are on social media including a Facebook group and the new Ramblers website page. On both the website and Facebook there are facilities for footpath maintenance updates which can be posted via Rosemary Williams. We now have 222 members on the email circulation list.
- The seven Oxford Path Wardens continue to work successfully with Jim Parke to maintain Oxford's footpaths.
- We thank David Godfrey for his continued role on the Committee providing a valuable link between the Area and our Group.

- We have appointed a replacement for Judy Palmer, our Group Secretary whose term of office ended at the AGM with an enthusiastic new member, Jane Foster.



Path maintenance by the Oxford City group (photos before and after)

- We thank Helen Burlingham for her time as Publicity Officer. Rosemary Williams, who is our Communications Officer, has incorporated this role into her brief.
- Membership is 305 as of 30th September 2017. Robin Harrison has compiled a suggestions list for 'Growing a Group' that we will discuss at our 2018 meeting.

Elaine Steane

THAME & WHEATLEY

Walks - Our walks programme continues to grow with 93 walks in the main programme not including walks on our annual break, this year to Cricket St Thomas, our history weekend at Avebury nor our join 20th anniversary walks with H&G and D&W.



Group trip to Avebury



Anniversary walk at Rycote Chapel

Social - Christmas Lunch 2016 was attended by some 45 members and guests in Stadhampton enjoyed by all and a good contribution to Mali Development Group charity.

Publicity - In addition to our robust and effective recruiting from our walks programme extracts on Parish notice boards, we started in June 2017 a monthly radio piece of 20 minutes on the new, very local, Red Kite Radio. Discussions are taking place to see how this may be optimised in the future.

Membership - T&W again buck the trend of stable and falling membership with a rise at end Oct to 171, thought to be an all-time high. We pay especial attention to make new faces welcome on walks and on enquiry.

Footpaths - "Our" 21 miles of Oxfordshire Way has been surveyed, with waymarking

updated and vegetation cleared. We have plans to carry out similar exercises next year.

Conclusion Another excellent year for T&W.



Group holiday at the Golden Cap

VALE OF WHITE HORSE

This year we have had an exceptional walks programme with a record number of walks. As well as all the regular Thursday walks we have longer walks most Saturdays. The Abingdon Strolls, short easy walks around Abingdon are now held regularly twice a month and we now have two joint short walks with West Oxfordshire on first and third Tuesdays with increasing attendance from WO members. There was a day trip to Cheddar Gorge and we walked the Ridgeway National Trail in eight days over the summer. Seven walkers completed the whole trail. We are already planning other trails in coming years.



Cheddar Gorge Trip

Peter Skuse, our walks organiser has been checking the statistics of our walks over the past five years and found that the number of walks per year has increased by 34% and the average number of walkers attending our walks has increased by over 40% on a like for like basis. In addition, we have started easy graded walks, our Strolls in Abingdon. Putting these facts together, he was amazed to find we have doubled the total number of walker-walks over five years. This is a credit to all our volunteer walk leaders who create and lead a varied programme. Over the five years the number of leaders has remained about the same, which means that each has led more walks on average.

After a successful campaign by Jim Parke we recruited 13 PPWs either to fill vacant parishes or to replace PPWs who had resigned, increasing the number of Vale Parish Path Wardens to 61 which still leaves the following parishes to be monitored: Appleford, Ashbury, Baulking, Denchworth, Fyfield & Tubney, Goosey, Hatford, Kingston Bagpuize, Saint Helen Without, Watchfield. If you would enjoy walking in these parishes you might consider volunteering as a PPW.

This year the Vale Path Volunteers path maintenance team undertook 11 clearances on 4.8 kilometres of path, spending 165 person-work-hours. The team appreciates the good support from Arthur McEwan-James of OCC's Countryside Access Team. We have also benefitted from the two brushcutters and the three trained operatives among our members. Since its formation in 2012 the VPV team has undertaken 51 path clearance sessions, it celebrated its fiftieth clearance this year on a footpath near Canada Lane in Faringdon. We have started revisiting paths which we cleared in earlier years in order to maintain them.

Our Footpath Officer's main work is with major housing developments that impact on PROWs. A major one is Abingdon Airport, where we hope to regain some significant paths unusable since WWII. Farmers change of land use is also affecting paths with loss of permissive paths to Access Land, deer fences and encasing paths in high fences.



The Ridgeway

On behalf of Oxfordshire we organised a stand at the White Horse Show in August and held the Navigation, Planning and Leadership course in October. Vale members also played significant roles on the Ridgeway National Trail Partnership bodies and in Friends of the Ridgeway.

John Gordon

WEEKEND WALKERS



Oxon Weekend Walkers (OWW) continues to thrive. We offered a walk every Sunday last year, covering the length and breadth of the county (and occasionally further afield), with a variety of distances, terrains and start times. Walks ranged from 4 to 15.5 miles (average 10 miles), with an average turnout of 16. This programme was led by 20 walk leaders (compared with 28 last year) and several people generously led four or five walks. We offer plenty of support to potential walk leaders, and are pleased that two people led their first walks and several attended the Area walk leader training.

Our website and active Facebook presence, including fabulous photos posted from walks, continue to attract new members: the increase in membership from 150 to 162 over the last year includes 30 new people. The group is friendly and welcoming, with plenty of lively talk and discussion on walks. We have re-established links with the 20s & 30s group through several joint walks. The group also enjoyed a rich and varied social programme and a weekend on the Cardigan coast, and has provided a platform for the formation of small groups walking various long-distance paths and national trails.

Helen Barnham

WEST OXFORDSHIRE

West Oxfordshire Ramblers continues to thrive. For the Summer programme this year, we put on 32 walks, compared with 26 the previous year. Our winter offering is usually a bit less, but again there are 26 in our current programme compared with 20 the previous year. We were pleased to welcome Matthew Savage as a new regular leader, and we now have Roger Taplin and Irene Davison leading the occasional walk in addition to our usual regulars. We were sorry to hear that Beryl Braithwaite is not well enough to continue her regular walks from Chipping Norton.

As regards numbers on walks, that seems to vary considerably. Our members don't seem to be really interested in joining the Area picnic – for the last 2 years there have only been 2 of us in the West Oxon contingent – perhaps a pity since Broughton Castle was a great venue for this year. I hear, on the other hand, that the shorter walks, joint with the Vale, can attract more than 20 people. (One person has said to me that they would like longer walks in our area during the week – not sure what can be done about that.) There was a pleasant surprise when a group of 10 walkers from London asked to join one of Matthew's walks.



One more small thing that I feel it my duty as Chair to carry out, though it isn't in the job description: I report on path problems when I encounter them as leader – as, of course, we all should. Last February I reported 2 stiles near Leafield that were dangerous because they'd been chewed by horses: I've not been back to see if they were repaired and the OCC website hasn't recorded

any action. Last month, our group found a path that the farmer had labelled as "Private Lane", though he hadn't actually removed the fingerpost – just hidden it in bushes. This time I asked David Godfrey for advice: we'll see if it gets more attention after he passed it on.



Judith Wardle

