



Summer 2016 Awayday to the Isle of Wight

The Vale Group's Summer 2016 Awayday was held on Saturday 25th June.

This year's took us to the Isle of Wight. Most walkers met at the Lymington ferry terminal and enjoyed a 40 minute relaxed crossing in the fresh air across to Yarmouth with lots to see and admire. There were views to where we would be walking later in the day, the headland above the Needles, with the Needles clearly visible. On arriving in Yarmouth we met up with members who had decided to make a weekend of it and who had stayed on the island. In total 21 walkers set off from Yarmouth. A few had stayed the previous night on the mainland.

From Yarmouth we followed the river Yar and its estuary and then up and then down to Freshwater Bay for lunch mostly at the HF hotel. We encountered the first of the light showers we would have during the day, nothing heavy, lasting just long enough to get waterproofs on! After enjoying lunch we walked up Tennyson Down to the monument and were treated to wonderful views in all directions. Then down to the Needles Battery for closer views of the Needles and a 'free' museum. And also enjoying the fresh air off the Atlantic. From there we passed Alum Bay Leisure Park and up again over the rugged Headon Warren and then down to the coastal path by the sea which would eventually return us to Yarmouth.

The island is incredibly quiet, has beautiful scenery and a rich assortment of fortifications and history. Together with a friendly group of walkers this made an enjoyable day out and well worth the effort of travelling down there.

Peter Skuse, Walk Leader



Old Man Bridge near Radcot; with hardly any old men. (Photo J Gordon)

New easy, short Abingdon 'STROLLS'

Our short, easy paced Strolls from Abingdon started in June with walks on the first Thursday and third Tuesday of the month. These strolls will continue throughout the winter.

Whether you are new to walking, want to try something different or are finding longer rambles too much then do come and join us in the Market Place, Abingdon for one of our 'STROLLS'.

These walks are no more than 3.5 miles long and last up to 2 hours. There will be a short stop along the way for coffee and snack, and hopefully at the end we will get together somewhere, pub or café, for more filling refreshments. There will be plenty of time to enjoy the sights and chat in good company.

The pace of these walks will be similar to the health walks gentle pace or easy by Ramblers grading. There will be no stiles or hills. We will be walking on some country paths. Walks may be circular returning to Abingdon or a linear walk to somewhere locally and return by bus. Details of the routes can be found online on Walksfinder nearer the time of the stroll.

For further details contact the Vale Ramblers walks organizer: Peter Skuse. Tel. 01235 533757 or email: peter.skuse11@gmail.com

.....or just turn up!

We hope to see you.

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

There are still a few places left on the Navigation, Planning and Leadership course to be held in Abingdon on 5/6/8 October. It is classroom-based on the Wednesday and Thursday evenings with a practical session outdoors on Saturday. Contact valeramblers@gmail.com or 07968 710869 for more information or to book a place.

Thames Path

2016 sees the 20th Anniversary of the Thames Path National Trail. To celebrate this, Graham Butler, the Secretary of Surrey Area and the Ramblers representative on the Thames Path National Trail Partnership walked the whole trail on consecutive days in July as a relay. Local Ramblers groups provided assistance, leaders and company along the way. Pat Loneragan led from Oxford to Abingdon and John Gordon from Abingdon to Wallingford. In the photos opposite Pat can be seen with the Major of Oxford at the start of his leg and again the next day at the ceremonial handover of the relay baton to John in Abingdon.

This summer also saw Vale Group walk the Thames Path between Lechlade and Goring in a series of 13 walks; a mixture of circular and linear, long and short, upstream and downstream, including a boat trip. Many thanks to all leaders involved and to Peter Skuse for the idea and the planning and coordination

Vale Path Volunteers

Last winter and spring the Vale Path Volunteers carried out a number of path clearances around the Vale. The new brushcutter was so successful that we have bought a second and we now have a third person, Richard Kenyon, trained in its use, making three trained operators. There is always plenty of work for other people on our clearances so if you want to spend some time in the fresh air and make a difference, get in touch with Jim Parke who is planning the winter programme of clearances. This isn't a big commitment, there will be one or two working parties per month and we have a pool of volunteers so most people do much less than that.

Jim Parke, jmh.parke@btinternet.com



Follow Vale Group on Facebook

Vale Group now has its own Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/valewhitehorseramblers/> or search for us with @valewhitehorseramblers

If you are a Facebook user please 'like' this page so that your friends know about it too. There is nothing on the page that identifies you to anyone else. Liking it means you will get notified of posts in your Facebook timeline. You can comment on posts but at the moment it is not set up for you to put your own posts there.

If there was an interest in a Facebook group where members can discuss topics and share information then we could revitalize the Vale Facebook Group we tried some years ago. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/132559573461021/> This never took off but perhaps we now have more members who use Facebook.

The link to report a footpath problems has changed
<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/report-issue-public-right-way>



The Thames Path 20th Anniversary Baton Relay. Handovers in Oxford and Abingdon, starting towards Wallingford.

(Photos Steeve Tabbitt)

The Chairman's Ramblings

Do You Walk?

As long as I have been a member of Vale Group we have had many members who never come on our led walks. That is not a problem; maybe you joined the Ramblers because of their campaigning and you want to support the good work they do protecting rights of way and the countryside. But if you don't walk with us because of where we walk, when we walk, how we walk (too fast, too slow), too many dogs, if we talk too much, or not enough, or anything else, then I'd like to know. Please give me a call or send me an email. I can't promise we can meet your requirements but if we don't know them then it will only be by chance that we are ever likely to organize walks you might like.

Gender Balance

At the Oxfordshire Area Council in July, Des Garrahan, the chair of the Ramblers Board of Trustees who was visiting, pointed out that nationally the majority of Ramblers members are female, by a smaller majority so are walks leaders but on group committees and Area Councils/Committees, the majority are male, even more so in executive positions. Looking round the room, Oxfordshire bore this out but he said we were more balanced than many.

I can't tell what the Vale membership gender makeup is but my observation is that we regularly have more women than men on walks. By definition, I have never been on an exclusively female walk but I do remember an occasion when two of us turned up late and changed what looked like being a 100% female walk. However, see the photo on the back page for an unusual occurrence.

So, can we correct the gender imbalance in Vale Group? Although we have several female leaders several have moved away recently and it would be good if a few more volunteered to take their place. Training is available if required (gratuitous plug for the course in October!) and there are a couple of vacancies on the Vale committee. Talk to me or any committee member if you could help.

OS Maps on phones

I bought a new OS Explorer map recently. It said on the cover 'Now includes mobile download'. Further investigation revealed a scratch code on the inside back cover. I downloaded the OS Maps app for my phone and downloaded the map I had bought. It is a good quality map which can be used with the GPS in modern phones to navigate using the detail of a 1:25,000 scale map showing field boundaries and all rights of way. The app also comes with a detailed map of the whole country which is downloaded as required (so needs network data access). This has a lot of detail but no rights of way information and a satellite view version too. The map I had bought was loaded onto my phone and so doesn't require a network to use. The app also shows walking routes which can be downloaded too.

There is also an OS subscription service which lets you buy downloadable maps directly without the paper version and many other apps like BackCountryNavigator and Maverick which let you download OS Explorer maps to your phone but I liked this as it is free if you are buying the map anyway and comes with the Ordnance Survey seal of approval.

John Gordon ,Tel: 07968 710869, valeramblers@gmail.com



*A rare occasion—a male walk. Not planned that way, no women turned up.
Thames Path from Newbridge to Swinford. And the sodden lamb we rescued from the river that day.*

(photos : J Gordon)

Parish Path Wardens

There will be another workshop for Parish Path Wardens on Friday October 7th at Upper Heyford Village Hall (0930-1600). Up to now the workshops have been held at the weekend on Saturdays. However, Sarah Aldous, the Field Officer who will be attending this workshop, asked if we could try out a weekday. If you are a PPW and haven't been to one of these, they are useful and interesting. Even if you have already been on one you might learn something useful about CAMSweb the OCC new method of reporting path problems. If you are interested in possibly becoming a PPW, come along and find out what it is about. Send me an email to register an interest in coming.

Jim Parke, jmh.parke@btinternet.com

The Vale Way

This summer we walked the 27 miles of the Vale Way again in both short and long walks but this year from West (Longcot) to East (Abingdon). The Oxford Fieldpaths Society also walked it in three sections from Abingdon to Longcot. We added stickers to many of the waymarks to help walkers find the route. We are getting fingerposts erected at each end to mark the start/finish and we have been advised by OCC Countryside and Access Team that it meets the criteria to be marked on OS maps as a recreational path. Given the way OS maps can now be downloaded (see other article on OS maps) this can happen quickly as the digital versions of maps are updated much more frequently than the paper ones.

The Vale Way is also listed on the Long Distance Walkers Association website so it is becoming established as an accepted route. The next steps are to improve the web site and produce a publicity leaflet. Seeing it as a tourist attraction I hope we may get some external funding to print it.

I think this is a success for Vale Group. Well done everyone who has helped.

AGM

The 2016 AGM will be held at Drayton Village Hall on Saturday 12th November. There will be a walk starting at 1000 followed by a free lunch with the AGM starting at 1330. There will be a chance to see photos from our walks this year and your chance to give the committee and other volunteers feedback on whether we are doing what you want from the group

Dates for your Diary

Fri 7th October	PPW Workshop, Upper Heyford
Sat 12th Nov	AGM, Drayton
December	Mince Pie Walks
Sat 4th Feb 2017	First Aid Course, Kidlington
Sat 11th Feb 2017	Oxfordshire Area AGM, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell

Your Vale Group Committee

Chairman	John Gordon
General Secretary	Vacancy
Treasurer	Joan Wyatt
Membership	Pat Lonergan
Walks	Peter Skuse
Footpaths	Dave Cavanagh
Publicity	Vacancy
Countryside	Vacancy
Ordinary Members	Bob Evans, Christine Tunna, Jim Parke

As well as this paper newsletter, the Vale Group and Oxfordshire Area circulate news items by email. This includes notice of extra walks and cancellations. Sign up to our email list by mailing patlon@ntlworld.com