



Vale Ramblers on the bridge over the River Evenlode near Finstock.

(Photo J Gordon)

Become a Detective of Lost Paths

There are probably many potential rights of way in Oxfordshire which, for one reason or another, have not so far been claimed, i.e., 'Lost paths'. Just after World War 2 under the National Parks Act, county councils were required to identify Public Rights of Way and register them on definitive maps. Unfortunately many rights of way have never been so registered and consequently are not in a legal sense, proven. Many of them are still in regular use, particularly around villages, and are far from 'lost' to those who use them. Other have sadly disappeared completely over time.

A factor that has given urgency to this situation is that the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 has brought in a deadline of 2026. All paths must be recorded on the Definitive Map by 2026 – after this date it will be simply be too late. Many historic paths, i.e., ones that came into existence before 1949, but which are not registered, will be lost forever. This applies specifically to paths which are claimed as being based on such historical records as Enclosure Awards and Tithe Awards. These Awards relating to parishes often had large scale, detailed maps, showing the routes of paths and roads at a time when the land was being enclosed in the 18th and 19th centuries. The maps can be studied in conjunction with the actual text of the award, which will often list the routes being set out with a route description and details of status and width. On a more positive note, however, it will still be possible to claim paths based on evidence from people who certify that they have walked them over a 20 year period without being challenged by the landowner.

These maps can be found in the County Records Office at St. Luke's Church, Temple Road, Temple Cowley OX4 2HT. Tel: 01865 398200. Other maps for the former Berkshire areas, such as parishes in the Vale of White Horse District, will be found at the Berkshire Records Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF. Tel: 0118 937 5132.

The two main sources for a would-be detective are therefore Enclosure and Tithe Award Maps. Other maps which

may be found useful to consult are the 25 inch to the mile (Scale 1:1,250) OS County Series of Oxfordshire, which were produced in the 1890s. The Enclosure and Tithe Maps often show public rights of way. In all cases, a comparison of these maps with the existing Definitive Map might reveal paths and routeways found on the Enclosure/Tithe/early Ordnance Survey maps but which were never recorded on the Definitive Map.

For some parishes evidence of lost paths may be found if at some stage a railway company intended to construct a railway through them, even if they were never built. Railway companies were required to compile plans and books of reference which give varying amounts of detail on public and private rights of way within the 'lines of deviation' of the proposed railway and so can be a valuable source of reference.

Any Rambler Members who are interested in undertaking such research as a lost-path detective should start with the aid of a large sheet of tracing paper, placed over the Definitive Rights of Way map for their chosen parish. A copy of the large scale Definitive Maps for Oxfordshire is to be found in the reference section of the major libraries. Other useful locational information to be traced onto the tracing paper are the parish boundary, major and minor roads, rivers, railways, canals and parish churches etc. When the traced map is completed, it can then be compared to the Enclosure, Tithe Map, or First Edition 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey (County Series) of the parish to determine whether any paths shown on the earlier maps are missing from the Definitive Map. If there are, then it could be that this is evidence of a 'lost' PRow which may be eligible to be claimed.

A very useful book which explains this process in great detail, with worked examples, is 'Rights of Way – Restoring the Record' by Sarah Bucks and Phil Wadey.

Jim Parke

Summer 2016 Walks Programme

We have a near record number of walks in this summer's programme with a wide variety for you to enjoy. As well as our popular Thursday walks, we are again joining with West Oxfordshire group in providing walks in the south of West Oxfordshire. We will be walking all of The Vale Way in five bus-friendly sections in May and June, and there are also two longer walks along the Way from Faringdon to Wantage and Wantage to Abingdon in May and July.

In July and August we are walking the Thames Path, from Lechlade to Goring, in thirteen circular and linear walks. This is an opportunity to walk the sections that you may not have done before. One walk includes a cruise on the river.

Our awayday in June this year will be to the Isle of Wight. After crossing as foot passengers on the ferry from Lymington the walk starts at Yarmouth, then over to Freshwater Bay, Tennyson Down to the Needles then along the northern coastal path to Yarmouth. We will be treated to magnificent scenery, sea views and peaceful surroundings with many places to rest and refresh.

We hope to see you on the walks and hope the weather is good.

Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser

Report footpath problems at

<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/report-problem-public-right-way>

Shorter and Slower walks

There has been strong interest in these walks so this summer we intend to offer shorter walks, 3-5 miles long, at an easy to leisurely pace. These walks will begin in May, initially in Abingdon on a weekday. The routes will be stile-free with no steep inclines. The dates of these walks have not yet been finalised and we are still looking to confirm leaders for these walks. We would like anyone who is interested in these walks and those who might be prepared to lead a walk, including former leaders, to contact us so we can contact you when all details are confirmed.

Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser

tel: 01235 533757, email: peter.skuse11@gmail.com

OFS Walking the Vale Way

Ramblers in the Vale of White Horse are cordially invited to join the Oxford Fieldpaths Society in walking the whole 27 mile length of the Vale Way during the summer. The Society has organised 3 linear walks. The first is on Saturday June 4th - Abingdon to Ardington; the second Saturday July 2nd - Ardington to Stanford in the Vale; and Saturday August 6th - Stanford in the Vale to Longcot. The walks will be led by Jim Parke. If you wish to come on the walks please contact Jim Parke two or three days before the walk so that he can give further details, particularly on the car sharing arrangements.

Jim Parke

Tel. No: 01865 730664. Email jmh.parke@btinternet.com



Fallow deer in Cornbury Park on a misty autumn walk.

(Photo J Gordon)

The Chairman's Ramblings

Pat Lonergan and Tony Vincent are planning a **YHA-based trip**, probably in June or early July 2016. It will be mid-week, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights, in term time, not too far away, but preferably hilly, if not necessarily mountainous. For example, the Wye Valley, Shropshire or similar. The details will be announced using our Vale email list, but anyone who is not on that list but wishes to register an interest, please phone or text Pat on 07521 333430 and we can then phone or text you the details when decided.

We have had stickers made for **The Vale Way** which we will be fixing (with OCC permission) to fingerposts and waymarks along the route to guide walkers. As well as walking the way this summer—from West to East his time, in long and short stages, we are also planning to produce a leaflet to inform the wider public. We have had reports of non-Ramblers walking the entire Vale Way already and (see invitation opposite) The Oxford Fieldpaths Society are planning to walk it in three stages this summer.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to **The Big Pathwatch**. Oxfordshire was high in the list of counties with the most kilometre squares surveyed and we were the first county to complete the list of random squares assigned to us. BPW does seem to have caught the public imagination; more than half of squares surveyed were done by people who were not Ramblers members. The phone app left much to be desired but it had its uses and it can still be used to report path problems.

Congratulations to Vale Rambler Dave Cavanagh who was elected as **Chair of Ramblers Oxfordshire Area** at the AGM at Begbroke in January. Knowing Dave from his years on our committee and also as vice-chair of area I am sure he will take the Area forward and build on the good work done recently by Susan Maguire. At the AGM we also met Sir Muir Gray who is Oxfordshire Ramblers new president.

Volunteers to help with the work of the Vale Ramblers are always welcome. This doesn't have to be within the formal structure of the committee. At the moment we need someone to send details of our walks, events and other successes to local publications. This work is all done over the internet and involves keeping a short list of local newspapers and newsletters and sending them relevant details of walks etc for their neighbourhood. We also encourage people to monitor local planning applications near them and comment on those which affect rights of way. Advice on the scope of comments is given. We also need someone to take minutes at our meetings. This last role probably does involve attending our committee meetings!





A really high stile

(photo: J Gordon)

PPW Workshop

A workshop for Parish Path Wardens is being held on Saturday March 19th at Clifton Hampden Village Hall. The workshop starts at 9.00 am and finishes at 4.00 pm. The workshop will include details of the recently introduced CAMSweb (Countryside Access Management System website). This enables PPWs to input information of path problems directly into the Countryside Access Team's PROW data base. As in previous workshops there is a practical session when the group will go out on a walk around local paths under the guidance of the County Field Officer. This workshop will be of special interest to PPWs in the Vale of White Horse and part of the South Oxfordshire District Council areas as the Field Officer for the workshop is Arthur McEwan-James who is the newly appointed Field Officer South-West. It therefore provides an opportunity for PPWs to meet Arthur. If you wish to reserve a place on the workshop and receive further information please contact:

Jim Parke - Oxfordshire Ramblers Area PPW Network Coordinator jmh.parke@btinternet.com

Dates for your Diary

Sat 19 March,	Parish Path Warden Workshop, Clifton Hampden
Sat 23rd April,	Abingdon Clubs and Societies Day, Abbey Buildings
Sat 14 May	Vale Spring Social, Sunningwell Village Hall
Sun 19 June	Area Picnic, meet at Combe, walk to Stonesfield for picnic
Sat 25 June	Vale Awayday, Isle of Wight
Sun 21 August	London Blind Ramblers, Chilton
Sun 28 August Mon 29 August	White Horse Show



Waymarks showing the new Vale Way stickers

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

Your Vale Group Committee

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

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

We plan to hold this course again in 2016. It covers the basics of map reading, planning and leading a walk. The aim is to give you knowledge and confidence to lead a ramblers walk but many of the skills learned can equally well be applied to walking on your own.

The course is planned to be held in Abingdon on 5th and 6th October in the evening and an outdoor session on Boars Hill on Saturday 8th. There is no charge to attend the course.

To book a place, send your contact details to J Gordon, 3 Lydsee Gate, Wantage, OX12 9XY.

Or phone John on 07968 710869 or email him at valeramblers@gmail.com