



A Still, Sunny Calm on Farmoor Reservoir.

(Photo D Cavanagh)

Our Led Walks Programme

Summer 2017 Walks Programme

We have our largest ever programme thanks to the hard work of our volunteer leaders. We have a full programme of our regular Thursday walks, an increased number of walks with West Oxfordshire group, a history walk and the Abingdon Strolls continue. We will be walking the entire length of the Ridgeway National Trail in 8 sections as our themed walks for the summer. There are two walks at each end of the trail over a weekend. This together with our awayday gives members the opportunity for overnight stays as many did on our awayday last year. Our awayday this year is a walk taken from the Ramblers book 'Walk Britain - Great Views' and takes us to Cheddar Gorge and Black Down with great views from the highest part of the Mendip hills. Together with a variety of walks around our area and beyond we have much to look forward to this summer.

Request For Leaders

I know we regularly ask for new leaders but to sustain a vibrant programme we need volunteer leaders. There is a leadership course every October where the aspects of leading walks is explained and demonstrates how easy leading can be. Or you can just watch and ask a leader at any time. If you can only lead one walk it would be a tremendous help. We have a number of pre-planned routes so planning becomes easier and you would be fully supported if required. Please give it a go.

Contact Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser, tel. 01235 533757 or email: peter.skuse11@gmail.com

Rambling History

For some years now I've been leading 'history walks' from time to time in the Vale: circuits of a particular parish, or two neighbouring ones, at a leisurely pace, allowing plenty of time to introduce some interesting and instructive features of the past of that locality. Evidently I've chosen dates when not much else was going on, since the walks have attracted a good turnout. Most recently we had 36 people on an eventful ramble around Culham and Sutton Courtenay.

Every village has a separate story to tell; but there are lots of common features too. In this case my theme was the historic differences between two communities located on either side of the same river. Culham lay in Oxfordshire, and long belonged to the great abbey at Abingdon. Sutton lay (until 1974) in Berkshire, and formed a royal estate which was then made over to a prominent Norman family, the Courtenays. The villages had little contact. In the early days they were even claimed by rival Saxon kingdoms, Culham by Mercia from the north and Sutton by Wessex from the south. Until 1806 no bridge connected them.

Both villages profited from commerce along the river, but Sutton more so. It grew wealthy from the textile trade. To this day it boasts three of the most outstanding houses of substantially medieval construction in the whole area. It also possesses more associations with public life, as the country residence of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his socialite wife Margot, and the last resting-place of George Orwell. But Culham outstripped Sutton in the age of science. Its nuclear fusion laboratory was far more advanced technologically than the power station, established simultaneously in the 1960s, which is named after Didcot but actually situated in Sutton Courtenay parish.

On our walk we gave equal attention to both villages. As we crossed the bridge between the two, and halted for refreshments, one of the party had a fainting fit. Fortunately we had first-aid expertise to hand, and all proved fine. A useful test for our H & S precautions. But we did summon an ambulance, just in case. Within minutes not one, but two were at hand. One from Mercia and one from Wessex, perhaps?

The next history walk will be a gentle midsummer tour of another nearby parish, Drayton, on 24 June. All welcome.

Bob Evans robert.evans@history.ox.ac.uk

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

We will be holding another the Navigation, Planning and Leadership course in 2017. It will be held in Abingdon on 4/5/7 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.



The team at Milton, and Longworth.

(Photos J M Parke)

Vale Path Volunteers

During the year 2016, the Vale Path Volunteers path maintenance team of the Vale of White Horse Rambler Group undertook 13 path clearance projects throughout the Vale. It has cleared just over 2 kilometres of hedgerow or woodland, and spent 140 person work hours doing it. Richard Kenyon a member of the team received LANTRA training to operate a brushcutter and the Group received funding from Area Council to purchase a second brushcutter. Both machines were used in a work session at Milton village in October on a path forming part of the Vale Way. Five new members joined to the team during the year. The Team also received funding from Area Council to purchase a number of secateurs, pruners and loppers which Mike Sergeant of the Blitz and Klean Path Maintenance Group was able to obtain at very preferential rates.

The team continues to receive very good support from Arthur McEwan-James, Field Officer South-West of the Countryside Access Team. Arthur liaises with landowners before the team undertake path clearance on their land. He has also suggested paths for the team to work on and has spent two work sessions with the team. Suggestions for other paths that could be cleared are made by Ramblers.

Since its formation in 2012 the VPV team has undertaken 39 path clearance sessions, and it is estimated that it has cleared nearly 8 kilometres of path and spent a total of 540 person hours in doing so.

The photographs above show the team ready for action at Milton, and after a path clearance at Longworth



Mince Pie Walks .



(Photos D Cavanagh,, J Gordon)

The Chairman's Ramblings

While I am happy that our summer programme has a record number of walks, I am slightly concerned that they are led by fewer leaders. This leaves our programme vulnerable if certain people stop leading. Please read Peter's request for leaders on the front page.

The **Disabled Ramblers** <http://disabledramblers.co.uk/> are a group who tackle routes using mobility scooters. On Saturday 12th August, they will be meeting at Bury Down on the Ridgeway for a trip to Wantage Monument and back. They have invited us to join them but they travel slowly so it might not be a challenging walk for you. However, any former walkers who are now forced to use a mobility scooter, or have partners or friends in this situation would also be welcome to participate. Go to their website and contact them for more information. I'll be going out of interest.

I'd really appreciate help with **publicity** for the Vale Group. This might just take the form of sending walks from our programme to appropriate publications like What's On, Roundabout, and newspapers. All that is required is a computer as most publications will take events by email or via the web. Please get in touch if you can help..

John Gordon 07968 710869, valeramblers@gmail.com

The Vale Way

The Vale Way continues to feature in Vale walks. All four Thursday walks in February used part of it (admittedly the fourth Thursday Abingdon walk only a few hundred metres).

In 2017 we have a few targets for development of the trail: the signs at each end should be installed; an official opening at the western end (we already had the eastern one in 2015); improve the website; develop a leaflet; and see the trail on the OS Maps.. If we achieve some of them this will be a good achievement.

Parish Path Wardens

The Vale has a reasonably good coverage of parishes in the PPW scheme but there are a cluster of parishes in the west of the Vale without wardens. If you live in the west around Faringdon, or just like visiting there regularly, please look at the list of parishes shown here <http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/VWHppw.htm> and let me know if you would consider being a warden for one of them. Or just phone for a chat if you have any questions.

The duties are not onerous, mainly walking all the paths in a parish at least a couple of times per year, reporting problems to the county council, checking the signage, snipping brambles around stiles to keep them passable.

Jim Parke, jmh.parke@btinternet.com

Tel: 01865 730664

The Ridgeway 2017

As you will have seen on the front page, Vale Group will be walking the Ridgeway in 8 legs this summer. The dates will be July 1, 2, 15, 22, August 5, 19, Sept 2, 3. All Saturdays except July 2 and Sept 3 which are Sundays following a Saturday leg. Since these are the furthest ends of the Ridgeway we thought some people would appreciate the chance to stay overnight.

As a taster for the walk we have invited Sarah Wright the Ridgeway National Trail Officer to talk at our Spring Social (Saturday 6th May, Chilton) to tell us about The Future of the Ridgeway. Come along and hear from Sarah about how this ancient trail is used and relevant today. There's a free cream tea too!

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@ntbworld.com

Vale Pocket Programme - Summer 2017

APRIL

Sat 1st 10:00 9.5 miles East Hendred Down car park
 Thu 6th 10:30 5.5 miles Southmoor, Waggon and Horses
 Thu 6th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 11th 10:00 6.5 miles Warborough, the village green
 Thu 13th 10:30 4.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 18th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 18th 10:30 5 miles Eynsham, Clover Place car park
 Thu 20th 10:30 5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Sat 22nd 09:30 10.3 miles Oxford, South Hinksey Park
 Tue 25th 10:00 6.5 miles West Hendred Greenway
 Thu 27th 10:30 7.8 miles Abingdon, Market Place

MAY

Tue 2nd 10:30 5 miles Stanton Harcourt, Harcourt Arms
 Thu 4th 10:10 5.8 miles Faringdon, Market Place
 Thu 4th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 6th 14:00 5.5 miles Chilton, village hall
 Sat 6th 16:00 Spring Social, Chilton
 Tue 9th 10:35 5 miles Besselsleigh, The Greyhound
 Thu 11th 10:30 5.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 16th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 16th 10:30 6.5 miles Witney, Market Square
 Thu 18th 10:30 5.5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Sat 20th 10:00 9 miles Ashbury, Rose & Crown car park
 Tue 23rd 10:00 5.6 miles Hailey, King William IV
 Thu 25th 10:30 9 miles Abingdon, Market Place

JUNE

Thu 1st 10:10 7.6 miles Faringdon, Market Place
 Thu 1st 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 3rd 10:00 9 miles Streatley, Ridgeway car park
 Tue 6th 10:30 8.2 miles Standlake, Black Horse PH
 Thu 8th 10:30 6.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 10th 09:30 10.7 miles North Leigh, St Mary's Church
 Thu 15th 10:30 5.5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Sat 17th 10:00 10.5 miles Cheddar, Cliff Street car park
 Tue 20th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 20th 19:00 6 miles Eynsham, /Clover Place car park
 Thu 22nd 10:30 10 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 24th 10:00 4.5 miles Drayton, village hall car park
 Sun 25th 10:30 7 miles Milcombe, the church
 Tue 27th 19:00 4.75 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Thu 29th 10:30 6.5 miles Bampton, St Mary the Virgin

JULY

Sat 1st 09:30 11.25 miles Ogborne St George, Old Chase Rd
 Sun 2nd 09:30 11.75 miles Uffington White Horse
 Tue 4th 10:30 10 miles Burford, main car park
 Thu 6th 10:30 7.5 miles Buckland, village hall car park
 Thu 6th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 8th 10:00 10.5 miles Bishopstone, Royal Oak car park
 Tue 11th 10:30 7 miles Lambourn, car park off High St
 Thu 13th 10:30 6.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 15th 09:30 11.5 miles East Hendred, Ridgeway car park
 Tue 18th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 18th 10:30 6.5 miles Church Hanborough, the church
 Thu 20th 10:30 6.5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Sat 22nd 09:30 9 miles Streatley, Lardon Chase
 Thu 27th 10:30 7.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place

AUGUST

Tue 1st 10:30 7.1 miles Bampton, St Mary's Church
 Thu 3rd 10:10 5.9 miles Faringdon, Market Place
 Thu 3rd 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 5th 09:30 11.25 miles Nuffield, the church
 Thu 10th 10:30 5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 12th 09:30 10.6 miles Brightwalton, village hall
 Tue 15th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 15th 10:30 5.5 miles Begbroke, The Royal Sun PH
 Thu 17th 10:30 5.5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Sat 19th 09:30 12 miles Chinnor, High St, Village Centre
 Sun 20th 11:00 5 miles Chilton, London Blind Ramblers
 Thu 24th 10:30 8 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sun 27th 00:00 White Horse Show
 Mon 28th 00:00 White Horse Show
 Thu 31st 10:30 8 miles Letcombe Bassett Church

SEPTEMBER

Sat 2nd 09:30 12 miles Wendover, Hale Rd/ Church Lane
 Sun 3rd 09:30 12.5 miles Ivinghoe, Beacon car park
 Thu 7th 10:10 5.5 miles Littleworth church, park nearby
 Thu 7th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sun 10th 10:00 9 miles Charlbury, Spendlove car park
 Thu 14th 10:30 6.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Sat 16th 10:00 11 miles Ramsden Church. Park in village
 Tue 19th 10:30 3.5 miles Abingdon, Market Place
 Tue 19th 10:30 5.5 miles Eynsham, Clover Place car park
 Thu 21st 10:30 5.5 miles Wantage, Market Place
 Thu 28th 10:30 8 miles Abingdon, Market Place



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' or 'Follow' this page and you will get notified about new items posted.

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

Dates for your Diary	
Sat. 6th May	Spring Social, Chilton
Sat. 17th June	Awayday, Cheddar Gorge
Sun. 25th June	Area Picnic, Broughton Park
Sun 20th August	London Blind Ramblers visit
Sun/Mon 27/28th August	White Horse Show, Uffington
Wed/Thur/Sat 4/5/7 October	Navigation&Leadership Course Abingdon

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