



Awayday at Cheddar Gorge (left) and The Ridgeway (right).

(Photos J Gordon)

Summer 2017 Walks Programme Highlights

This summer we had our busiest programme yet, with new joint walks with West Oxfordshire and a themed trail walk added to our regular walks and special events.

Early in the programme, at our spring social, we had a walk up to the Ridgeway from Chilton, followed by a talk on the Ridgeway national trail which set the scene nicely for our walking the Ridgeway later in the summer.

Our awayday this year was to Cheddar Gorge. The walk was a Ramblers recommended route and it took us from the gorge up to the High Down of the Mendips from where we could see across the Bristol Channel to Wales. Led by John Gordon, 13 of us enjoyed perfect weather and thoroughly enjoyed the day out, ending with tea in the gorge.

This was followed shortly by one of Bob Evans' history walks in and around Drayton where we heard about some of its history and the 'bellringing vicar'.

Early summer was a period of dry, sunny and often very hot weather. Our walking of the Ridgeway National Trail started at the beginning of July during this weather which made for thirsty work on the first legs from Overton Hill to Uffington but ensured we had tremendous views. The next legs to the finish at Ivinghoe Beacon had some showers but it was still an exhilarating experience. The Ridgeway is a well-used trail with major events occurring regularly. We met some of the 2000 runners enduring a 100km race

The weather also had its poor days with a couple of walks rained off. Unfortunately one of these was our only evening walk of the summer! But it has been a great summer for walking and we hope it continues into the autumn. And a big thank you to our team of volunteer walk leaders without whom the above could not happen.

Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser



The team at Idstone

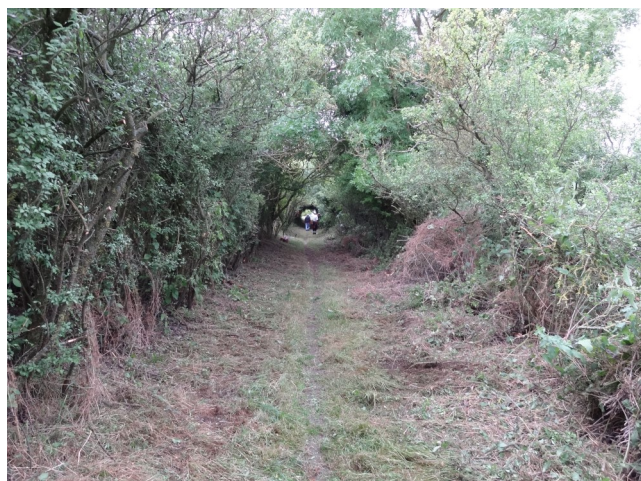
(Photo J M Parke)

Vale Path Volunteers

During this Spring and Summer a contingent of the Vale Path Volunteers has undertaken no less than 9 path clearance projects in the Vale. With 3 trained operatives and 2 power brushcutters able to be deployed, the team can be very effective at clearing away the brambles and hawthorn bushes that so often restrict the path width and cause damage to clothing. Nettles, even those of chest height, fall ready victim to the spinning blade of the brushcutter. On one path, at Duxford, the brushcutters dealt very effectively with the tall and thick Himalayan Balsam stems. Arthur McEwan-James, the Countryside Access Team's Field Officer for the Vale, has been very pro-active in requesting the assistance of the VPV. Clearance sessions have been undertaken at Hardwell Wood, Longworth, Drayton, Garsington, Southmoor, Idstone (near Ashbury), St. Helen Without, Duxford, Chilton and Letcombe Bassett. It can be seen that the VPV operates throughout the Vale District. Altogether the team has spent 135 person hours and has attended to approximately 4.2 kilometres of hedgerow or woodland. If, on any ramble, you consider that a path needs the attention of the VPV then please get in touch with me.

Jim Parke - VPV Coordinator

jmh.parke@btinternet.com



Letcombe Bassett Cleared

(Photo J M Parke)



Jim Parke unveiling Blue Plaque

(Photo: J Gordon)

D'Arcy Dalton Honoured

You are probably aware of the name d'Arcy Dalton because of the long distance path that traverses Oxfordshire to end on the Ridgeway near Wayland Smithy but how many of you know who he was and what he did?

Two very important contributions were made by d'Arcy Dalton toward the preservation and enhancement of Oxfordshire's Public Rights of Way network. Firstly, in 1933 he was responsible for the production of a map showing in clear detail those footpaths and bridle paths which the then Oxford and District Footpaths, Bridlepaths and Commons Preservation Society deemed to be public rights of way. Secondly, he worked tirelessly throughout the period 1949 – 1958 to ensure that as many P[ublic] R[ights] o[f] W[ay] as possible received legal protection through being included on the Definitive Map and listed on the Definitive Statement..

The society mentioned above, which predated The Ramblers by a decade, became the Oxford Fieldpaths Society, and d'Arcy Dalton served it in many roles including Chairman and finally President.

In recognition of his contribution to the PROW of Oxfordshire, OFS (through their recent chairman Jim Parke) proposed to the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Board (chair Bob Evans) that he be recognised with a plaque. This was accepted and a plaque was installed at his former house in Great Milton. Jim Parke is shown above unveiling it in August.

Dates for your Diary

Wed/Thur/Sat 4/5/7 October	Navigation&Leadership Course Abingdon
Sat 28th October	AGM Cumnor
Sat 20th Jan 2018	Oxfordshire Area AGM



A new Blue Plaque

(Photo: J Gordon)

The Chairman's Ramblings

Since Jim wrote the report opposite, the Vale Path Volunteers have carried out their **50th working party**. This was near Canada Lane in Faringdon. I think this is a marvellous achievement and I'd like to thank Jim and all the volunteers for their hard work which has made many paths walkable for the people of The Vale.

In the **winter walks programme** which Peter Skuse has put together with the help of volunteer walk leaders, I would highlight the **Mince Pie Walks** in December. These usually attract a good number of ramblers and some non-members too. We might be accused of mince pie bribery to get good attendance but they are always enjoyable events. This winter we will have two joint walks with West Oxon Group every month. On the first and third Tuesdays there are walks in West Oxfordshire, usually not too far from the Vale. We have coordinated with WO; they lead some, we lead others but they are all in the programme for both groups.

Oxfordshire Ramblers had a stand at the **CountryFile Live** event in Blenheim Estate in August. Several Vale members volunteered on the stand, talking to the public about the Ramblers and walking in general. I found it a rewarding event and many thanks to all those who stepped up.

The **London Blind Rambling Club** visited us as usual in August. This year there were ten blind or partially-sighted walkers with some sighted guides. Vale members walked with them on a 5 and a 7.5 mile walk from Chilton. Blessed with sunny weather and a light breeze we had a good time, ending with tea and cake at Chilton Garden Centre. Thanks to everyone who helped.

John Gordon 07968 710869, valeramblers@gmail.com



An Idea for the Vale? .

(Photo: J Gordon)

Parish Path Wardens

This Spring saw a recruitment campaign for Parish Path Wardens to fill vacant parishes in the Vale of White Horse. I am pleased to say that we were successful in recruiting volunteers for the parishes of Buscot, Coleshill, Drayton, Fernham, Little Coxwell and Littleworth. In addition PPWs came forward for Grove, South Hinksey, Sunningwell and Wootton to replace those who were retiring from the role. This leaves the following parishes without a PPW. Baulking, Denchworth, Eaton Hastings, Goosey, Harwell, Hatford, Kingston Bagpuize, St. Helen Without and Watchfield. If there are any rambler members living in or near those parishes who may be interested in volunteering as a PPW please get in touch with me.

The new on-line system of reporting path problems – CAMSweb – seems to have been adopted successfully by most PPWs. The Countryside Access Team is working under great pressure with some 4000 reported path problems on their database. Many of the problems relate to stiles and gates which are normally the responsibility of the landowner or farmer to keep in good repair. The situation is not helped by the fact that two posts on the CAT's staffing establishment are 'frozen'; i.e there are vacancies which are not currently being filled.

The Vale PPWs are divided into 4 teams on a geographical basis, each with a Local Coordinator. They are Dave Cavanagh (west Vale), John Gordon (central Vale), Jim Parke (north-east Vale) and John Orchard (south-east Vale).

Jim Parke jmh.parke@btinternet.com

Vale Pocket Programme - Winter 2017/18

OCTOBER

Tue 3rd 10:00	5 miles	Bampton, St Mary the Virgin
Thu 5th 10:10	5.1 miles	Faringdon, Market Place
Thu 5th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sun 8th 10:00	11.5 mile	Faringdon, Market Place
Tue 10th 10:30	8.5 miles	Blewbury, recreation ground car park
Thu 12th 10:30	6 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Tue 17th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 17th 10:30	5.5 miles	Cumnor, Old School car park
Thu 19th 10:30	5.5 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Sat 21st 10:00	11.5 mile	Ardington, Home Farm, School Road
Thu 26th 10:30	9 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 28th 10:00	5.5 miles	Cumnor, village hall, Leys Road
Sat 28th 13:30	.	Cumnor, village hall, Leys Road
Tue 31st 10:30	5 miles	Old Marston, Oxford, Victoria Arms

NOVEMBER

Thu 2nd 10:10	5.1 miles	Faringdon, Market Place
Thu 2nd 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 4th 10:00	11.5 mile	Sparsholt Firs, Ridgeway car park on either side of the B4001
Tue 7th 10:00	6 miles	Stanton Harcourt, The Harcourt Arms
Thu 9th 10:30	6.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 11th 10:00	8 miles	Bury Down, Ridgeway car park
Thu 16th 10:15	5 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Sat 18th 09:30	11.2 mile	Moulsoford, village car park
Tue 21st 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 21st 10:30	6 miles	Newbridge, The Rose Revived PH
Thu 23rd 10:30	7.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 25th 10:00	9 miles	Sparsholt Firs car park
Tue 28th 10:00	5.7 miles	Marsh Baldon, The green outside Seven Stars
Thu 30th 10:20	6 miles	Botley, Arnolds Way, playing fields. Park in car park or layby near school

DECEMBER

Sat 2nd 10:00	10 miles	Chilton, minor road near garden centre
Tue 5th 10:00	5.5 miles	Combe Cricket Club car park
Thu 7th 10:10	6 miles	Buckland, village hall car park
Thu 7th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Thu 14th 10:30	6.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 16th 09:30	8.7 miles	Uffington, village hall car park
Tue 19th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 19th 10:30	5 miles	Eynsham, Back Lane/Clover Place
Thu 21st 10:30	5.5 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Thu 28th 10:30	8 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 30th 10:00	4.5 miles	Marcham, east entrance to churchyard

JANUARY

Tue 2nd 10:00	3 miles	Bampton, St Mary the Virgin
Tue 2nd 10:00	5.5 miles	Bampton, St Mary the Virgin
Tue 2nd 11:40	2.5 miles	Bampton, St Mary the Virgin
Thu 4th 10:10	5.6 miles	Southmoor, Spring Hill bus stop (west end of village)
Thu 4th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 6th 10:00	9 miles	Uffington Castle NT car park (Charge for non members)
Tue 9th 10:00	9 miles	Wantage Market Place
Thu 11th 10:20	6 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 13th 10:00	7 miles	Sandford-on-Thames, Sandford Lane car park
Tue 16th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 16th 10:30	5 miles	Freeland, the church
Thu 18th 10:30	5.5 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Thu 25th 10:30	7.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 27th 10:00	12.5 mile	Bury Down, Ridgeway car park

FEBRUARY

Thu 1st 10:10	5.4 miles	Buckland, village hall car park
Thu 1st 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 6th 10:00	5.6 miles	Linch Hill Leisure Park, Stoneacres Lake, 1 mile S of Stanton Harcourt
Thu 8th 10:30	6.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 10th 10:00	8 miles	Wantage, south of car park just off the B4494 where it crosses the Ridgeway
Thu 15th 10:30	6 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Tue 20th 10:30	5 miles	Stanton Harcourt, The Harcourt Arms
Tue 20th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Thu 22nd 10:30	8 miles	Abingdon, Market Place,
Sat 24th 09:00	11.5 mile	Aston Rowant Nature Reserve carpark

MARCH

Thu 1st 10:10	5.4 miles	Faringdon, Market Place
Thu 1st 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 6th 10:00	6.3 miles	Standlake, Black Horse,
Thu 8th 10:30	4.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 10th 09:45	9 miles	West Hendred (The Hare)
Thu 15th 10:30	5.5 miles	Wantage, Market Place
Tue 20th 10:30	3.5 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Tue 20th 10:30	5.8 miles	Burford, the church car park
Thu 22nd 10:30	8 miles	Abingdon, Market Place
Sat 24th 10:00	11.5 mile	Clifton Hampden, public car park opposite Barley Mow
Tue 27th 10:30	6.5 miles	Blewbury, recreation ground car park
Thu 29th 10:20	7 miles	Marsh Baldon, village green, next to Seven Stars



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.

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

To report a footpath problem to the council

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

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

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

We will be holding another 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.