



The Oxfordshire Way near Islip.

(Photos J Gordon)

Walking Further Afield

Our summer programme this year featured walks a bit further away than usual. Graham Cross planned a three day trip in May to Derbyshire walking the White to Dark Way. This trail, from Bakewell in the Dark Peak, to Hope in the White Peak had some stunning scenery, not least the part along Stannage Edge and the views over Ladybower reservoir. In the end Graham couldn't do the walk himself but eight of us did, and we had a great time. Graham is planning another trip next spring - details overleaf.

The annual Awayday was in Gloucestershire in June, starting at Bourton-on-the-Water and walking through The Slaughters, Naunton, and back along the Windrush. Craig's planning was exceptional, with platters of sandwiches and chips ordered meaning we didn't have to wait a long time for food. Then a table booked for a cream tea at the end in Bourton capped an excellent day.

Our long distance trail this summer was the 67 mile Oxfordshire Way which we walked in six legs every two weeks in July through to September. Unlike the Thames Path and The Ridgeway which we have walked in recent years, the Oxfordshire Way, from Bourton-on-the-Water to Henley, doesn't pass through the Vale at all. We are getting more used to car sharing for linear walks. If you have any ideas for walk further afield please get in touch to discuss.

Winter 2018 Walks Programme Highlights

This winter's programme is almost our largest yet despite a couple of our regular leaders being unavailable to lead this winter. All our regular walks on Thursdays from Abingdon, Wantage and Faringdon/West Vale are included in the programme as are walks jointly with West Oxfordshire on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. By the time you read this we will have finished walking The Oxfordshire Way and are about to start walking The Oxford Greenbelt Way in late September which continues with 4 legs in October and November. We have 8 Mince Pie walks in December across the Vale and West Oxfordshire. In addition there are two longer leisurely paced walks and walks from Grove on two Tuesdays. There are longer walks at weekends and the Abingdon Strolls continue on the 1st Thursday of the month so you should be able to find a walk to suit you. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteer leaders for the hard work they put in to create a vibrant and varied programme.

Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser



Volunteers at work.



(Photos JM Parke)

Request for Walk Leaders

I know we regularly ask for new leaders but to sustain a vibrant programme we need volunteer leaders. There is a leadership course this October, 10,11,13, where the aspects of leading walks are explained and it will be demonstrated 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. Perhaps you would be happier leading with a friend. We have a number of pre-planned routes so the task 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

Ridgeway Experiments

Next time you are on The Ridgeway near Bury Down, you may spot some curious new features – rectangular plots in the verges.

Chris Woodham, a PhD student with Oxford University, established 28 ‘experimental plots’. These plots will be treated in different ways to test how the plants and associated wildlife respond over the next 3 years. Chris’ study aims to identify how best chalk grassland along the Ridgeway’s verges. can be restored and conserved

The management techniques being trialled in the plots include: cutting the vegetation; removing cut vegetation; removing thin strips of topsoil; and sowing a native chalk grassland wildflower seed mix.

A few Vale volunteers helped Chris with the initial clearance of the plots. We will be watching the results.



Vale Group 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.

A Trip to Lulworth Cove, Anyone?

I am planning another trip away next spring to follow on from the successful Peak District trip this year. The venue is the Dorset coast and tentative dates are 10 to 12th May, avoiding the early May bank holiday weekend.

We would stay somewhere near Lulworth Cove for 2 nights and walk on all three days.

A rough outline, to be confirmed, would be to arrive midday on Friday and walk in the afternoon out via Durdle Door beach along the coast and back, about 8 miles.

Saturday either car share or get transport to Kimmeridge Bay and walk back through the firing ranges (open at weekends) along the coastal path or similar to Lulworth, visiting Tyneham, the lost village inside the ranges. About 10 to 12 miles.

Sunday we car share to Worth Matravers and walk the coastal path to Swanage (about 10 miles). Returning to Worth Matravers to collect the other cars (maybe a quick drink in the famous Anchor pub in the village, worth it just to see inside it). Here we can finish or alternatively return for a meal in Swanage before we depart home. Some parts of the coastal path on day two are quite challenging rises but not too long and well worth the effort for the fabulous views.

If you would be interested in this trip, please let me know.

Graham Cross graham@chriscross.co.uk

Dates for your Diary

10/11/13 October	Course, Abingdon
Sat 3rd November	Vale, AGM, Sunningwell
Sat 2nd February 2019	Oxfordshire Area AGM, Wytham



Stannage Edge during the Vale trip to walk the White to Dark Way.



(Photos D Cavanagh, J Gordon)

The Chairman's Ramblings

In spring Ramblers announced their interpretation of the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) saying that groups could only send walks programmes to members who had signed up centrally for marketing posts. Fortunately, after a lot of feedback, they changed their interpretation and defined group/area walks programmes and newsletters (such as this one) as part of the normal work of the organisation, like the Walk magazine. So, I hope you will be glad to learn that you will continue to receive the Oxfordshire Walks Programme Booklet and this Vale Rambler newsletter irrespective of what you tell the Ramblers about marketing posts.

In June I spent an interesting day in Oxford at a Ramblers Roadshow. There were a number of sessions intended to help volunteers better understand a number of strands of the Ramblers work. I attended sessions on leading walks and the big changes underway in how Ramblers data is managed. Others were on Walking for Health, GDPR, and specialist sessions for treasurers. I recommend you sign up for one of these roadshows next time there is one within easy travelling distance.

Last winter we commissioned two signs to mark the ends of The Vale Way. In spring we walked the way in three roughly 9 mile sections. On the first and last legs we got the new signs unveiled by The Mayor of Abingdon and the chair of the Longcot Parish Council, with subsequent publicity on The Abingdon Blog and The Faringdon Folly. The unveilings are shown below.

John Gordon, Chairman



Unveiling of Signs at either end of the Vale Way.



(Photo: J Gordon)



A VPV work party

(Photo J Gordon)



The results

(Photo JM Parke)

Vale Path Volunteers

During this spring and summer the Vale Path Volunteers Path Maintenance Team has been very active in clearing some important paths in the Vale. So far ten paths have been cleared by the Team. These include a section of the d'Arcy Dalton Way up Odstone Hill that links the Vale to the Ridgeway. The wet spring and the hot summer have combined to cause a prolific growth of nettles to the extent that the path was almost obscured by these plants. Other important paths tackled by the team include the one which runs from Rushey Lock on the Thames to Carswell Marsh, and then connects to the network of paths in the parish of Buckland. This path showed a typical problem of a path becoming squeezed between a field fence on one side and an overgrown hedgerow on the other. The team also undertook a work session on the Ridgeway National Trail, helping to clear away tree and shrub vegetation near Wayland's Smithy which was encroaching on the path. A large patch of Himalayan Balsam was a particular problem on the path which follows a stretch of the Thames backwater near Duxford. The team also cleared paths for the first time at Uffington Gorse, and the Byway at Crab Hill on the eastern side of Wantage.

A particular path that has seen the Team spend no less than three sessions working on is the path which follows the Ginge Brook from West Hendred to Ginge, eventually leading up to the Ridgeway. This path was completely overgrown, to the extent that it was virtually impenetrable. Both brushcutters were in action, clearing away brambles and nettles covering the ground surface. Much lopping and secateuring was needed to cut away the woodland vegetation on the hedgerows. Finally the Team has revisited two paths which have seen earlier work sessions by the VPV, both in the town of Faringdon; namely Volunteer Way in the town centre which forms part of the Vale Way, and Canada Lane situated on the western edge of the town.

In total the team has spent 170 person hours and cleared the equivalent of 4 kilometres of pathway so far this year on these sessions.

If, on any ramble, the walk leader considers that a path needs the attention of the VPV then please get in touch with me. Also if any member would like to join the VPV team contact me.

*Jim Parke - VPV Coordinator
jmh.parke@btinternet.com*

To report a footpath problem to the council

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

Your Vale Group Committee

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

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

We will be holding another Navigation, Planning and Leadership course this autumn. It will be held in Abingdon on 10/11/13 October. It is classroom-based on the Wednesday and Thursday evenings with a practical session outdoors on Saturday. Come along to learn about map-reading and/or tips on leading a walk.

Contact valeramblers@gmail.com or 07968 710869 for more information or to book a place.

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 valeramblers@gmail.com