



Ramblers - Vale of White Horse Group

Spring 2014 Newsletter



A selection of photos from the Vale Mince Pie Walks 2013.

(Photos: D Cavanagh, C Bass, P Skuse.)

Vale Mince Pie Walks

Walking with the Vale of White Horse Group during December was rewarded with a mince pie, or if really lucky, a glass of hot mulled wine. To support the Ramblers Festival of Winter Walking the Vale group offered themed walks, 'The Twelve Vale Mince Pie Walks for Christmas', with the chance to eat a mince pie en-route. These walks, at locations throughout the Vale area, were advertised in the local press, local notice boards and websites serving the area. The walks showed off the diverse countryside in the Vale, the historic market towns of Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage and with a guided history walk around Cumnor. The walks attracted 145 walkers, including at least 20 non-members. We hope that the non-members enjoyed walking with us and that they would join us in the future. The mince pies went down well with over 200 being eaten.

We would like to thank all the leaders for providing and carrying the mince pies, and extras, and for making the Mince Pie walks a success. We think this will become a regular event as it promoted the Ramblers, and our group, favourably to the community. *Peter Skuse,*

Come to the Spring Social

On Saturday 12th April Vale Ramblers will be welcoming the Spring with a Spring Social meeting in Drayton.

We will be meeting in the barn at Downsfield House at 2pm. We will take a pleasant walk of about five miles around Drayton and its surrounds. All walkers will receive a crème egg. When we return to Downsfield House there will be a cream tea and a free Easter egg raffle.

Following tea there will be a talk from Robert Evans on the subject of 'Oxfordshire Blue Plaques: A new Theme for Ramblers?'

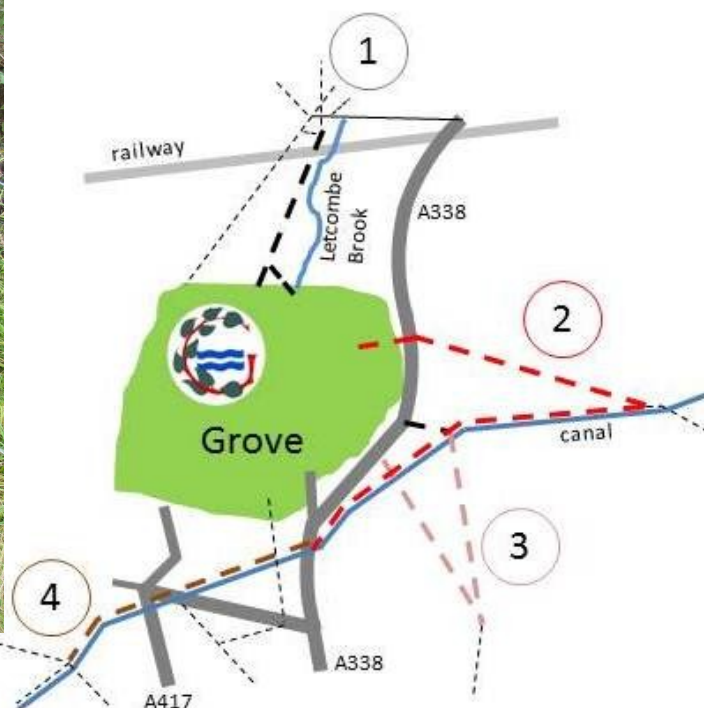
There are now over 70 Blue Plaques across Oxfordshire and the number rises each year. Robert Evans, chair of the Blue Plaques board, will introduce the scheme, and suggests how Ramblers might take advantage of it.

Cream tea £3.50. Pay on the day but alert John Gordon, 07968 710869, for numbers.



Spot the faults on this 'stile'.

Photo D Cavanagh



Do you need funding to improve access along PRow in your parish?

If so, the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (toe²) may be able to provide it. This charitable, non-profit-making company gives grants of up to £5K, occasionally more, for three categories of improvements. One of these is "Increased access to and wider promotion of the countryside and green spaces." I can illustrate this with my own experience. During winter 2011-12 I photographed all the path furniture, mostly stiles (many of which are atrocious) [see above], in Grove Parish. In addition to sending my report to OCC Countryside I also sent it to Grove Parish Council's Environmental Services Committee. The chair of that, Jean Nunn-Price, suggested that we use my report as a springboard for an application to toe² for money to replace the stiles with gates. A sub-committee was formed, including myself and Brian Stovold, chair of the East Vale branch of the Wilts Berks Canal Trust, as some of the paths requiring improvement were former canal towpaths. To cut a 20-month story short, we met several times, including on occasion with Mark Sumner, OCC Countryside field officer for the Vale. Then the parish council submitted an application to replace 15 stiles and four footbridges on route 2 shown above. OCC offered to finance the footbridges, including replacing the associated stiles with gates. We asked toe² for financial support for the installation of the remaining nine gates. We were granted £5K last December.

Should you consider going down the toe² route, I would strongly recommend that you sit down with your Countryside field officer at the beginning of your proposed project. They know the difference between what's desirable and what is achievable. They are a mine of information, including knowing the relevant landowners, whose cooperation is essential. In addition, OCC Countryside advises toe² on applications.

Footpath News

It is déjà vu is it not? This time last year we were also looking at vast swathes of water obscuring rights of way on the more low lying areas and here we are again. The Thames Path was inaccessible and parts of it remain in that state. We have already had to drastically reroute a walk to more elevated country. It appears that the monsoon months are December and January so be prepared.

On other matters the current path diversions proposed in our area are:-

- Baulking FP5 and FP6, there are 2 objections to this so I do not expect it to be resolved soon.
- Letcombe Regis FP2 and West Challow FP14, we did not object to this one, it was something of nothing
- West Challow FP 6, a better approach up the bank by the railway.
- Kingston Lisle FP1 and Baulking FP 11. Probably the first of many involving railway crossings. The F/P S/C has made no objection.

Cyclists on footpaths are still causing a few problems. These are probably a minority but it is still not pleasant to

Vacancy

meet a cyclist going full tilt on a narrow footpath.

On the county council front the new draft rights of way management plan has been published for consultation. This covers the aspirations of rights of way management for 2014 to 2024 so is a very far reaching document. Those interested can access it on the council web site. The footpath sub-committee will be preparing a reply to the consultation but other people can have their own say if they wish.

I shall be stepping down from the post of footpath secretary for the Vale at the end of this year so any offer of being my replacement would be gratefully received. It is not particularly onerous so why not give it a go. You are not on your own, there is a footpath sub-committee which deals with footpath matters comprising of the group footpath people in the Oxford Area. Think about it.

John Orchard, Footpaths Secretary
Telephone 01235 530489
e-mail jcandmjorchard@btinternet.com

Vale Summer Away Day Trip—14th June

For this summer we have planned an Away Day trip to Coaley Peak in the west of the Cotswolds, on Saturday 14th June. The walk is taken from the Ramblers book, 'Walk Britain-50 Best Views'. There are wonderful views across the Severn valley to the Malverns and walks around the Woodchester estate.

We are offering a choice of walks, the full 11 mile walk as described in the book or a shorter 5 mile walk followed by some time in Stroud. We will be travelling by minibus or cars. There will be a cost for using the minibus, approximately £10 each depending on numbers.

For further information or to book a seat on the minibus, money in advance please (non-refundable), contact Peter Skuse, Walks Organiser 01235 533757

The Chairman's Ramblings

I am pleased to see the **Vale Path Volunteers** have been working again this winter. See <http://ramblers-oxon.org.uk/VHPathvolunteers.htm> for a list of the good work they have done. Due to weather and path conditions they usually only plan a month ahead so there is nothing fixed for when you will read this. However, if you wish to help contact [Jim Parke](mailto:jmh.parke@btinternet.com) by email at jmh.parke@btinternet.com or by telephone 01865 730664. Jim tells me he has applied for a grant to buy a petrol strimmer for the group. Good luck with that!

The Oxfordshire **Parish Path Wardens** scheme continues to grow. There will be a workshop held in East Hanney on Saturday 20th September for current or potential wardens.

John Gordon, Chairman

Navigation, Walk Planning & Leadership Course

We had to cancel this course last year as we did not get enough people signing up. We will try again this year so if you have always wanted to try it, please book as if we don't get enough people this year we won't try again.

The course will be held in central Abingdon on 8th and 9th October in the evening and an outdoor session on Boars Hill on Saturday 11th. The course 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. There is no charge to attend the course.

To book a place, complete the form and send to J Gordon, 3 Lydsee Gate, Wantage, OX12 9XY.
Or phone John on 01235 763667 or email him at valeramblers@gmail.com

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I wish to take part in the Leadership Navigation & Planning Course, Autumn 2014,

Name:

Telephone and/or email:

Address:

Send completed form to: John Gordon, 3 Lydsee Gate, Wantage, OX12 9XY or email as above.

Vale Walks Reminder

APRIL

Tue 1st 10:00 12 mi Chilton, just north of the school
 Thu 3rd 10:35 5.5 mi Faringdon Market Place
 Sat 5th 09:30 12.5 mi Chinnor Hill Nature Reserve
 Thu 10th 10:30 6.5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 12th 14:00 5.2 mi Drayton, Stonehill House,
 Thu 17th 10:30 5 mi Wantage, the Bear
 Thu 24th 10:30 8 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 26th 10:00 8.5 mi Burbage church

MAY

Thu 1st 10:35 5.9 mi Faringdon, Market Place
 Sun 4th 10:30 9 mi Goring Heath
 Tue 6th 10:00 6 mi Ardington, opp Loyd Lindsay Rooms
 Thu 8th 10:30 6 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 10th 10:00 5 mi Wytham, White Hart PH
 Tue 13th 10:00 8.5 mi Blewbury, recreation ground
 Thu 15th 10:00 7 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel
 Sat 17th 10:00 9 mi Buckland, village car park
 Tue 20th 19:00 5 mi Abingdon Long Furlong Comm Centre
 Thu 22nd 10:30 7.5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 24th 08:45 13 mi Oxford Railway Station or
 09:41 Leamington Spa Station
 Thu 29th 10:30 6.5 mi Marsh Baldon next to Seven Stars PH

JUNE

Tue 3rd 10:00 8 mi Bury Down car park
 Thu 5th 10:35 7.3 mi Faringdon Market Place
 Wed 11th 19:30 5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Thu 12th 10:30 5.5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 14th 10:30 10.5 mi Coaley Peak, awayday, please book
 Thu 19th 10:30 5 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel
 Sat 21st 10:30 7.5 mi Clifton Hampden opp Barley Mow PH
 Mon 23rd 19:00 4.5 mi Letcombe Bassett near VH
 Thu 26th 10:30 7.5 mi Abingdon Market Place

JULY

Thu 3rd 10:35 8.3 mi Faringdon, Market Place
 Tue 8th 10:00 7.5 mi B4494 Ridgeway carpark
 Thu 10th 10:30 8 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Thu 17th 10:30 5 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel.
 Thu 24th 10:30 7 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 26th 09:30 12.5 mi B4494, Ridgeway car park
 Thu 31st 10:15 15 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel

AUGUST

Thu 7th 10:35 8 mi Faringdon, Market Place
 Sat 9th 10:00 8 mi Cuckhamsley Hill car park
 Thu 14th 10:30 6.5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sun 17th 11:00 5 mi Chilton, South Row, 'Wayland'
 Thu 21st 10:30 5 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel
 Sat 23rd 09:30 11 mi Oxford, Christchurch Meadows
 Thu 28th 10:30 10 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Sat 30th 10:00 9.5 mi Ramsden, church

SEPTEMBER

Thu 4th 10:35 7.7 mi Faringdon, Market Place
 Sat 6th 10:00 10 mi Longworth, Blue Boar PH
 Thu 11th 10:30 4.5 mi Abingdon Market Place
 Tue 16th 10:00 9 mi Longcot, the church
 Thu 18th 10:30 5 mi Wantage, the Bear Hotel
 Thu 25th 10:30 7.5 mi Abingdon Market Place

FLEXICARE

17th Annual Sponsored/Fund Raising Circular Walk

From The Loyd Lindsay Rooms, High Street, Ardington.
 OX12 8PS

Sunday 18th May 2014 (booking-in between 9 and 10 am)

To raise funds for **Flexicare** a small Oxfordshire Children's Charity, which provides help and support to families with severely disabled children in your area.

For further info: phone 01865 321881 or visit our web site
www.flexicare.org for on line registration.

Dates for your Diary

Saturday 29th March	Abingdon Clubs and Societies Day, Guildhall
Saturday 12th April	Spring Social, Drayton
Saturday 14th June	Away Day to Coaley Peak, near Stroud
Saturday 21st June	Area Annual Picnic, Wittenham Clumps
Sunday 17th August	London Blind Ramblers, Chilton
October 8,9,11th	Navigation, Planning and Leadership Course, Abingdon

Report footpath problems at

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

We have had to cancel walks recently due to the flooding. To make sure you are alerted to such events, 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	Rona Bingham
Walks	Peter Skuse
Footpaths	John Orchard
Publicity	Jim Parke
Countryside	Dave Cavanagh
Ordinary Members	Bob Evans, Pat Lonergan