

**Oxon Weekend Walkers AGM
Sunday 17th November 2019
The Plough, Wolvercote**

MINUTES

Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM, and thanked the walk leader for her considerable efforts in replanning the route at last minute because of flooding.

1. Apologies received from Kevin and Sheila, Phil and Judith, Anna, Jane P,
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 4th November 2018 were accepted.
3. Reports from current Committee

a. Chair

Last year I started my report by saying it had been a funny old year, with bonkers weather, the GDPR and getting our new website up and running. By contrast, this year has seemed all serenity and grace, and the group is flourishing. I have been rather more absent this year than I would have liked – indeed, it's me who's had the funny old year this year – but it's nice that everything has ticked along in the hands of our lovely committee and walk leaders.

So, as always, a big thank you to our walk leaders – who really are the lifeblood of this group. From a quick count up, I reckon 24 walk leaders this, which is just great. Together they have led a full walks programme, covering the breadth and depth of the county. One of the things I like about this group is discovering new places in Oxfordshire -and sometimes a bit further afield. We had three new walk leaders this year – Clare and Mike (they count as one!), Debbie and the Iberian girls (also count as one). So particular thanks to them, and I hope you feel you can lead another one - or even the same one again! And of course a big thank you to our regular stalwarts who led several walks Vanessa, Jane, Mark and Sheena, Lyn Pam and Ian, Gavin. Also, thank you to the people who post pictures on our social media – it's a great advert for the group, and I have enjoyed seeing the pictures even though I haven't made it to many walks.

Talking of social media, I would like to say a bit thank to Ian for getting to grips with this for us, and doing a fantastic job in getting us up and running on Twitter and Instagram, and building on our Facebook profile. We have a big following on Facebook – well, probably not big by some standards – but we do have regular new followers who find us via the Internet.

As Nicola has said, membership levels have remained steady and healthy; people come and go, of course. Area are very keen to drum up membership, but really what matters most is that our current members enjoy walking with us and stay with us. For that reason, we don't see the need to publicize the group proactively – Google and Facebook do all the heavy lifting for us.

We have had some nice social activities this year; not huge groups, but enjoyed but those who join in. Although we are of course primarily a walking group, it is nice to socialize sometimes too, especially for people new to the area. After-walks drinks seem to be popular.

A fun event this year was our 10th birthday, celebrated with a lovely walk, the most humungous birthday cake, and a jolly gathering here afterwards. A few of our early members came back to join in, and some of original members still walk regularly with the group. We had had our “ten of 10 walks” – although I have to confess that I don't know if we made it to 10 in the end! [Apparently we did more than 10]

Another highlight for a few of the group was a trip to the North Wales coast in the summer. I can vouch for how lovely the walking is, in fact I was up there the week before the group. Thank you to Carolyn for another fabulous trip and we look forward to the next one. It would be nice to have a few more weekends away. On my walk a few weeks ago we talked about some overnight trips, doing a 2-day circular or there and back walks – trips don't have to be long or complicated.

So, as you know, I am about to stand down as Chair, after 3 years in post and 1 year as without portfolio. I joined the group not long after it formed when I was at a difficult point in my life. I have made many new friends from the group; I have discovered all sorts of beautiful places. Through the group I discovered an appetite for walking I didn't know I had! When I joined, 10 miles was a push; now, 15 is comfortable and 20 do-able. My love of the Wales coast path was ignited by a trip to Pembrokeshire run by Ian Feetenby, and it seems fitting that I finished walking the path this year. Whilst I still enjoy walking with the group, I have also discovered the joy of walking solo, and have met some great walking buddies, two-legged and four-legged. Walking is the one thing that always makes me feel better, so I feel indebted to this group for all it has brought into my life. It a great group and I'm pleased to have made a contribution to helping it thrive.

The group is run by the committee, not the chair, and a fine job they have done, and continue to do. So, I want to say a big thank you to all the committee members for their contributions over the last 3 years. Our chairs emeritus Vanessa and Gavin continue to support the group, and I am honoured to now join them as a chair emeritus!

b. Publicity

Our website <https://www.oxonww.org> (designed and maintained by Dave F) continues to be the most important means of communication for Oxonww.

Our Facebook 'Group' <https://www.facebook.com/groups/oxonww> (241 members) continues to be the main platform where FB group members can share comments, photographs of walks etc.

In Jan 2019 Ian M conducted a review of the use of social media by other walking groups. Following the review we have now added 3 x social media accounts as follows

1. A Facebook 'Page' - <https://www.facebook.com/Oxonww/>
2. An Instagram account - <https://www.instagram.com/oxonww/>
3. A twitter account - <https://twitter.com/Oxonww>

Notes:

1. The main purpose of these 3 accounts is to reflect and amplify information on the Oxonww website to people who like to use alternative social media platforms.
2. All posts direct users back to the Oxonww website for further information
3. Only Oxonww admin can post to these 3 x accounts, however users can add comments to posts.
4. All Twitter account posts are now shown on the website home page at <https://www.oxonww.org/>

c. Walks Programme Secretary

This year we delivered 54 walks:

- The longest walk – thanks to Sheila & Kevin
- The shortest walk – thank you to Helen O'Neill for your mid summer evening meander
- The most walkers – apart from the 1336 walkers (and as many dogs) on the Brailes

three hills walk (not solely an OWW event but a great walk to take part in all the same), I think Nicola just pipped Ian Mac to the post.

- Walks from our regular leaders - particular thanks to continuing commitment from Sheena & Mark, Vanessa, Lyn, Jane, Devinder, Nicola, Gavin and others.
- We have some great photographers in the group too, and it is great that they have helped promote our walks by sharing super photos on our Facebook pages. Thanks to Kerry, Leonor, Ian and others.
- The best cake walk – thanks to Nicola, Helen and others who made our birthday walk and meal so successful
- To those who led the 10-mile birthday walks aimed at celebrating our tenth birthday- with particular thanks Vanessa and Gavin for your unstinting support and for the legacy!
- Number of first-time walk leaders- it was great to see Leonor and Carme (Team Iberia), and Debbie, leading their first walk. The total number of different individuals leading walks was similar to last year.
- The leader leading the most walks this year – this turned out to be.....awkward....it was me...just!
- The most helpful walk (Helen's mid summer meander)– thanks to those who did a good turn to help a drifting narrow boat, and changed a car wheel – all part of the fun!
- Walks with a difference - Laura's very enjoyable walk from Abingdon Sandford including the boat trip is definitely worth a mention.
- Total number of miles walked over the year was over 525 miles, not counting the fab Welsh Coast Weekend organised by Carolyn.
- Thanks to best efforts, only one weekend went without an organised walk. We had a near miss when the snow did its best to disrupt things in the North of the county – thanks to Devinder who stepped up at the last minute and put on a walk elsewhere for those able to get.
- Finally - Thanks also to everyone who walked with us over the year and who helped make our group able to provide the best weekend walking experiences.

On the technical front, we had a few website glitches during the year, but nothing serious. Some members have problems submitting walks and logging in, but this is easily resolved with a little manual intervention from me. The telephone forwarding service that we subscribe to still seems to be worthwhile. Although we do not receive many calls, it is a useful means of contacting the walk leader and avoids the need to publish personal numbers.

d. Membership Secretary

Our membership has been fairly stable at about 134 members for the last year or two. In September 2017 we had a maximum number of members of 160 but since then, maybe due to the introduction of the new data handling laws, we seem to have lost about thirty members to have a rolling average of about 134.

I have included a spreadsheet which was issued at the Area meeting in October which shows the trends of membership numbers for other Oxfordshire groups. You can see from this that we are not the only group with a fluctuating membership. If you consider the last two years only, our numbers are pretty stable, but if you take our peak year of September 2017 into account, our membership numbers seem to take a real nosedive. However, this is less dramatic if you consider the net change over a longer period of four or five years.

I think we can argue or prove anything with this data, but I do feel strongly that what should concern us more is how we treat new members or potential members when we first meet them on a walk. This is one of our strengths as a group and I would like to thank everyone who has been so welcoming and chatty with new members and for encouraging them to join us.

The work that Ian has been doing to broadcast our news, and what Dave does on the website, Helen's newsletters and all the Facebook posts, all help to promote us, as do the word-of-mouth recommendations, so thank you everyone for all you do.

e. Group Representative to Area Executive

I have been attending the Area meetings which are held in **Kidlington** every three months, (except when I am on holiday so thank you to Helen and Gavin for stepping in). The aim of these meetings is to pass on any information from Central Office and also to share good ideas and practices.

Area organise some annual events such as the Area picnic which was in Wallingford this year. You may remember Devinder's lovely walk which delivered us to the picnic in perfect time and returned us very scenically back to our starting point. The next Area Picnic will be hosted by Henley and Goring on Sunday June 28th, but before then there will be the Area AGM which is on 25th January in Beckley Village Hall at 3pm.

Area also arrange first aid training and a walk leaders' course which some of our members have taken part in and coordinate items such as our finances, lost paths and problems on the paths in our area.

Over the year there have been lots of discussions regarding issues such as Country File Live which quite a number of our members volunteered at again. Next year the show is going to be relocated to Windsor. We have also spent many hours discussing the planned Expressway linking Oxford and Cambridge

Since Jim Parke became Chair of the Area in February of 2019, he has been very active and has attended a committee meeting of most of the Oxfordshire Groups, including ours in July. He particularly wanted to thank everyone in the Weekend Walkers group for putting on a great programme of walks and for volunteering to run the group.

f. Social Secretary

Social events this year have included:

- Christmas drinks
- Christmas meal at La Cucina
- Quiz Night
- Theatre at the Playhouse
- Theatre at the Bodleian
- Mikron Theatre
- Two historical walks in Abingdon
- and of course our 10th celebration walk and meal

Coming up, we have a Christmas pub night and another theatre trip for next March, and post-Christmas meal (Jan)

It has been pointed out that the biggest and most frequent social events are the walks themselves, and everybody who stays on for a drink afterwards seems to enjoy that extra social contact too.

It would be easier to report if old socials were archived somewhere, but I think this list is more or less complete!

g. Webmaster

The web site has mostly run itself. There've been a few minor changes behind the scenes but, excepting the addition of a Twitter feed, little which effects the main content. I did change the format of the walks programme page

There has been one notable disruptive event:

Although we had no actual OWW site problems, an upgrade of central Ramblers did result in several days where the walks data feed stopped working. We dealt with this by putting up a redirect link taking people to the central Group Walks and Events Manager for the OWW group. This was [eventually] fully rectified by Ramblers and everything was restored to working order.

Some internal discussion between members of the Ramblers-Webs admin community resulted in a letter to Ramblers expressing concern at the situation and suggesting a number of technical discussion points regarding: communication; planning; testing; deployment techniques; and roll-back in the event of failure. Ramblers head-office has responded positively to these ideas and agreed to implement, as far as is practical - quite far in most cases, the necessary changes to avoid/mitigate any future upgrade side-effects.

This year has seen wide introduction of a new Ramblers data system for volunteers and staff; the Insight Hub allows groups to access up-to-the-minute **Membership** information; **Pathwatch** data for finding out about local issues and fixes; **Volunteering** data mined from members Profiles; and **Walking** data collected via the Walk Register app. I have yet to develop any ways of integrating these into our web site but I am looking at automating updates to our [Groups.io](https://groups.io) mailing lists.

The VOIP phone and SMS messaging facilities continue to provide a single point of contact for walk leaders. The service providers we use remain cheap and reliable and I have seen no cause to change either of these this year

h. Treasurer

Ramblers' Association: Oxon Weekend Walkers (OX40)

Accounts: 1st October, 2018 to 30th September, 2019

Date	Description	Debit	Credit	Balance
01/10/18	Balance brought forward			354.86
22/10/18	Area Funding received.		119.00	473.86
31/10/18	Income from Walking Partnership with Ramblers Holidays.		30.00	503.86
09/11/18	Payment for hire of hall for AGM.	70.00		433.86
23/11/18	Cotswold voucher for prize at AGM. (Devinder Sivia)	20.00		413.86
19/02/19	Walk leader encouragement prizes at AGM. (Helen Barham)	24.75		389.11
19/02/19	Group subscription for online OS maps. (Helen Barham)	83.33		305.78
27/02/19	Website/domain cost (Dave Flitney).	41.12		264.66
05/03/19	Area Funding received.		119.00	383.66
30/04/19	Income from Walking Partnership with Ramblers Holidays.		40.00	423.66
30/07/19	Cake for OWW 10 th anniversary walk. (Helen Barham)	40.00		383.66
17/09/19	Printing for publicity. (Helen Barham)	70.00		313.66
30/09/19	Balance carried forward			313.66

- Account signatories: Devinder Sivia, Kevin Hessey and Helen Barham.
- Independent examination of accounts for 2018/2019 by Ann Thompson.
- Annual return submitted to Area.
- Group allocation for 2019/2020: standard group formula to be applied.

4. Walk leaders draw

Each walk led earned one entry into a draw for a £20 voucher to spend at Cotswold Outdoor (plus a bonus entry for new walk leaders). The winner of the draw was Carolyn Blackmore.

Thank you gifts were given to :

- Pam C for leading the most walks
- Vanessa for the greatest total number of miles
- Claire and Mike, Debbie, and the Leonor and Carme for leading their first walks.

5. Stand down of current Committee

6. Election of new Committee

Post	Candidate	Proposer	Seconder
Chair	Ian Macpherson	Helen Barham	Kerry Forkner
Group rep to Area	Nicola Copeman	Helen Barham	Vanessa Corrick
Walks sec	Pam Cartledge	Sheena Derry	Vanessa Corrick
Social sec	No volunteer		
Webmaster	Dave Flitney	Nicola Copeman	Ian Macpherson
Membership	Nicola Copeman	David Flitney	Ian Macpherson
Publicity	No volunteer		

Treasurer	Peter Ransom	Sheena Derry	Nicola Copeman
Secretary	Kevin Hessey	Devinder Sivia	Lyn Roberts
W/O portfolio	Mary Scott	Helen Barham	Ian Macpherson
W/O portfolio	Laura Thomlinson	Kerry Forkner	Nicola Copeman
W/O portfolio	Vacant		

The new committee was accepted.

The standing-down Chair thanked the committee for their contributions over the last year and gave nominal gifts to Anna and Devinder, standing down as Social secretary (2 years) and Treasurer (8 years). The new chair thanked the old chair for her work over the last 3 years and presented a gift.

7. Oxford Orbital

The Oxford Orbital is a 25-mile circuit around Oxford which Rob Wakefield and Neil Hoggarth lead every five years. It was due to take place in October 2019 but had to be cancelled as part of the route needs replanning. RW is hoping to lead it again in 2020 but a volunteer is needed to lead the southern half. The chair encouraged members to accept the challenge.

8. Thames path walk

Berkshire and Children weekend walkers contacted the chair about sharing a venture to walk the Thames path across the three counties. There was general willingness for the group to be involved. Ian P will liaise with the other group re walks in early Jan. This might not replace our regular walks.

End of meeting