

Oxon Weekend Walkers AGM 7.15pm Sunday 8th November 2020

By Zoom

MINUTES

1. Apologies received from Tim M. Twenty two members present.
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 17th November 2019 were accepted.
3. Reports from current Committee

a. Chair

Well it has been an interesting year.

I became chair on Nov 17th 2019 and I inherited a walking group in great shape, finely sculptured by previous chairs and committees.

In Nov 2019 OxonWW had an active committee, committed walk leaders, an excellent website and an enthusiastic group of members.

What could possibly go wrong!?

Well..... we had a great first few weeks up to Christmas with social events and a variety of excellent winter walks including Broadway, Fringford, Chipping Norton and the traditional Mince Pie walk hosted by Neil in Bourton on the Water.

Buoyed with enthusiasm, by Christmas we already had great plans for 2020.

In addition to a normal programme of Sunday walks, group members were already planning,

a) Thames Path walks initiated by partner walking groups, b) a challenge walk in the Black Mountains in April c) a summers walking holiday in Wales d) plus embryonic ideas for social events throughout the year.

So let us take a short ramble through the events of 2020

Our Thames path walks were due to start on 26th Jan from Oxford Centre and then run for 4 consecutive weekends down the Thames towards London.

What could possibly go wrong!?

Wellconstant rain caused extensive flooding of the Thames and effectively caused the cancellation of all our Thames Path walks.

But at least our flexible walk bookings system allowed for alternative walks to be offered on higher ground around Oxfordshire.

What could possibly go wrong!?

Well..... we were then hit by Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis on 9th and 16th Feb which prompted the cancellation of both those Sunday walks due to further extensive flooding and 80 mph winds.

But at least our flexible walk bookings system allowed for some additional walks

And in February some of us started extra training for the April Black Mountain challenge (in Wales) and we completed walks of 15+ miles on Edge Hill, Bredon Hill and the Malverns.

We had a couple of social events in January and February to buoy our spirits and in early March we looked forward to spring with renewed enthusiasm and still plans for the black mountains and a walking holiday in Wales

What could possibly go wrong!?

Well....Everyone knows what happened next but I record for posterity that due to COVID all ramblers group activities were cancelled from 18th March – 31st May.

So with the worst Pandemic in a century upon us

What could possibly go right?

Wellwe used our website and social media platforms to communicate all changes very quickly. During the next 10 weeks our members were able to use our facebook group to share photographs of individual walk recces, empty motorways and hopes and advice for the future.

Also thanks to the initiative of Nicola we began Zoom Quiz Nites that ran every week from April 17th – June 27th

At the end of June ramblers announced that small group walks of maximum 6 could start from 1st July.

However these walks would require risk assessments, a booking system and special COVID precautions.

Our walk leaders responded magnificently, quickly adapting to the new booking system and risk assessments.

Thanks to Pam (walks programme manager) we were immediately able to offer walks for groups of 6 with the first walk was on Sunday 5th July.

Thanks to our volunteer walk leaders from 5th July we had walks available almost every weekend and sometimes 2 or even 3 walks on some Sundays.

As the COVID situation and government guidelines evolved, on 30th July Ramblers announced that larger groups of up to 30 walkers would be allowed, provided that certain protocols were adhered to.

At this point our walk leaders responded especially well and responsibly, with each walk leader deciding a maximum capacity for their walk.

Although government and ramblers guidelines allowed up to 30 walkers, each individual walk leader decided their own maximum, most choosing between 6 and 10 walkers for reasons of safety and practicalities.

So August, Sept and Oct was all going fine, Pam had the especially difficult job of balancing walks available with demand but it all worked well.

Towards the end of October, many had settled into a new normal with a choice of 2 or 3 walks each Sunday, in different parts of the county.

What could possibly go wrong?!

On Nov 1st the Prime minister announced that new COVID restrictions were going to be introduced and on Nov 3rd ramblers confirmed that there were no exercise exemptions that would allow even small group walks.

What can possibly go right?!

Well....

In Nov 2020 OxonWW still has an active committee, committed walk leaders, an excellent website and an enthusiastic group of members.

And I am confident that between us all, somehow, no matter what, we will work things out together and I look forward to 2021.

Thank you to everyone.

b. Walks Programme Secretary

Last year I came up with lots of statistics about our varied walk programme, the longest, the shortest, the best cake, the most walkers etc., but somehow this year it seems enough to have had any walks at all. We shouldn't forget the highlights including Neil's mince pie walk - enjoyed by many, including my daughter who never really walks! The rain and flooding in January put paid to several walks including most of the joint walks on the Thames Path, but a few of us then planned to do the Black Dragon challenge in the Brecons, and led a series of training hikes going a little further afield and a bit more challenging, which proved attractive to others too, taking in Ratley and Edge Hill, Bredon Hill, and the Malverns.

Amazingly, despite everything this year we delivered 59 walks - more than in the previous year, and the total number of miles walked in the year was over 580 miles. Over 65 different individuals took part in at least one walk with us since lockdown despite the Covid restrictions, which is a great achievement. We've had some great walks from around 18 different walk leaders - particular thanks go to those regularly offering - Sheena & Mark, Jane, Kerry, Ian and others.

The walk leader leading the most walks this year goes without saying - our chair set out to lead by example particularly post lockdown and has led over 12 walks this year, keeping the momentum up and helping ensure we continue to offer walking opportunities to as many as we can every week. It was great to see Mary leading her first walk, in fact she was so enthused she has continued to offer several more as she discovers the beautiful area around her village. We had our first geo cache experience, with one of our new walkers sharing her enthusiasm when unexpectedly discovering a cache on my Whichford walk.

It is great that several of you have continued to post your walking pictures, all helping promote our walks as well as inspiring others and encouraging solo walks during lockdown. The website continues to provide a sound basis for planning, managing and publishing walks, and has proved invaluable in allowing us to keep in touch and make our walks available, not just to our group but to those from other groups who were not really offering walks, and to lots of new members too. The telephone forwarding service that we subscribe to has been out of action since lockdown and we need to consider whether we continue with the subscription for this in future. With multiple walks becoming the norm for the foreseeable it may not be worthwhile. Finally - Thanks to everyone who walked with us over the year and who helped keep us sane.

c. Membership Secretary

Our current membership stands at 141 which is slightly up on this time last year. What is quite surprising is that we have managed to attract 12 new members since the start of September which, compared to other groups in the Oxfordshire Area, is a good number of new members.

I think one of our strengths, as a club, is our visibility in the media through our website, Twitter and Facebook accounts. Also, when new walkers do join our group walks, the experience they have is encouraging them to sign up to Ramblers and to our group. Many thanks to Ian and Pam for promoting the walks on the website and to everyone who has made a new potential member welcome on a walk.

Once I get news of a new member, I send out a welcome email with information on how to join our Facebook group and I also notify our committee about the new members so we can look out for them.

d. Group Representative to the Area Executive

The Area meetings have been conducted using ZOOM since lockdown, so there have been different challenges to overcome. I feel the meetings have been successful and, given that some members of the Area Committee were traveling over 25 miles to attend the Kidlington meetings, there have been some benefits in meeting from home. Thank you to Ian for standing in when I wasn't able to attend.

There has been much discussion about how to cope with the COVID virus and the restrictions enforced by the government. I feel Ian and Pam deserve a pat on the back as they have been quick to take on the guidelines sent by the Ramblers and soon created a way through for us all to follow when planning walks. Many of the walking groups in our area have found communicating with their older walkers to be difficult now that the walks booklet has become unworkable as a means of advertising walks. Fortunately, most of our members use the website which where we can advertise our walks each week; adding extra walks once the first walk is full. Thanks to Dave F for his continued work on the website and to Pam for keeping us all informed about walks.

Other items discussed over the year include the changing of the name for the 20/30s group who now call themselves Hike Oxfordshire, the need for a new Path Warden, attendance at the General Council Meeting which occurred in Bristol in January and the appointment of a new Membership secretary for the Area who is Wendy Mannix. We also hear from all the other groups in Oxfordshire Area and have a chance to share ideas and good practices. Sadly events such as the Area Picnic did not go ahead this year.

The Area AGM is on 12th January 2021 and will be a ZOOM meeting.

e. Social Secretary

I became Social Secretary in February shortly before things went quiet. Soon after the 2019 AGM in November OWW had met for Christmas drinks and then a delicious post-Christmas Lebanese meal in January – thank you to Nicola & Helen. Courtesy of Catherine and Vanessa, there were two theatre trips on the social calendar for February and March with the latter just being squeezed in while theatres were still open.

To lift spirits and keep the group together during the first lockdown, 11 weekly Zoom quizzes were run by Nicola, Ian & Helen. They proved very popular with an average of 18 members joining in. A

special Hallowe'en quiz fended off the gloom of the dark evenings. Also on Zoom, Lyn hosted two book group meetings for discussion of and tips for interesting reads.

A big thank you to everyone to who has organised a social this year providing a good number of events despite the situation. Thank you too to Dave for sorting out permissions so that I could post events on the website.

Social Events 2019 – 2020

Date	Type	Event	Organiser	Number (approx.)
7th Nov '19	Pub	Christmas Drinks at the Royal Oak	Nicola	12
18th Jan '20	Meal	New Year Nosh, Le Comptoir Libanais	Helen B	16
29th Feb '20	Theatre	Bleak House, Blackwells	Catherine	8
13th Mar '20	Theatre	Pride & Prejudice (Sort of)	Vanessa	6 (7 booked)
17th Apr '20	Quiz		Ian/Nicola	12
24th Apr '20	Quiz		Ian/Nicola	21
2nd May '20	Quiz	Nature & Wildlife	Ian/Nicola	20
8th May '20	Quiz	Only Connect	Helen B	26
16th May '20	Quiz	General Knowledge	Ian/Nicola	19
23rd May '20	Quiz	General Knowledge	Ian/Nicola	20
30th May '20	Quiz	Colour	Ian/Nicola	19
6th Jun '20	Quiz	All Things British	Ian/Nicola	18
13th Jun '20	Quiz	1980s	Ian/Nicola	15
20th Jun '20	Quiz	Food	Ian/Nicola	15
27th June '20	Quiz	Holidays	Ian/Nicola	14
8th Aug '20	Book Group		Lyn	6
31 st Aug '20	Post-walk drink	Centre of Oxford	Carme	Max 10
12th Sept '20	Book Group		Lyn	4
31 st Oct '20	Quiz	Hallowe'en	Ian/Nicola	14

f. Webmaster

Walk leaders phone services and messaging
I am unaware of any issues over the past year.

The website

Has undergone no major changes this year. One minor operational change during the year is that upgrades and security patches are now being applied by RamblersWebs staff. This has resulted in a reduction in the webmaster's technical role. Updates are now reported to me but I rarely have to actually do anything about them short of checking that all the functionality is still working.

g. Treasurer

Accounts: 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2020

Date	Description	Debit	Credit	Balance
01/10/2019	Balance brought forward			£313.66
25/10/2019	Income from walking partnership with Ramblers Holidays		£115.00	£428.66
19/11/2019	Cotswolds voucher for prize at AGM	£20.00		£408.66
21/11/2019	Refreshments at AGM	£42.80		£365.86
11/02/2020	AGM expenses	£23.50		£342.36
17/02/2020	Ordnance Survey subscription	£100.00		£242.36
30/04/2020	Income from walking partnership with Ramblers Holidays		£115.00	£357.36
04/05/2020	RWH Travel Ltd		£20.00	£377.36
30/09/2020	Balance carried forward			£377.36

Notes

- 1) Expenditure reduced due to period of activity resulting from coronavirus lockdown
- 2) Expenses for web costs etc. not yet claimed
- 3) Group allocation for 2020/21: standard group formula (£221.25)
- 4) Independent examination of accounts (to be) carried out by Louise S
- 5) Bank signatories: Peter R, Kevin H

4. Walk leaders draw

Each walk led earned one entry into a draw for an e gift voucher. Names drawn from a hat to receive vouchers were Antoinette and Carme .

Previous Chair HB thanked the committee for their efforts over the last year in keeping the group active and thriving.

5. Stand down of current Committee

6. Election of new Committee

Post	Candidate	Proposer	Seconder
Chair	Ian M	Helen	Dave
Area Rep	Nicola C	Pam	Gavin
Walks	Pam C	Nicola	Kevin
Social	Jane P	Vanessa	Dave
Webmaster	Dave F	Carolyn	Nicola

Membership	Nicola	Sheena	Jane
Publicity	Vacant		
Treasurer	Peter R	Nicola	Vanessa
Secretary	Kevin H	Dave	Jane
W/O Portfolio 1	Mary S	Pam	Lynn
W/O Portfolio 2	Laura T	Sheena	Carolyn
W/O Portfolio 3	Vacant		

The new committee was accepted. It was noted that the vacant positions could be filled during the year if volunteers came forward.

7. AOB

Discussion of how to support walk leaders to carry out recces. Buddy system suggested.

Noted that our Facebook group has more followers than we have members. Proposed and agreed that the Facebook name is changed to "Oxon Weekend Walkers, Friends and Followers"

End of meeting 8.15pm.