



**Oxon
Weekend
Walkers**

Oxon Weekend Walkers

Committee meeting 28 April 2024

The Nag's Head, Abingdon

Minutes

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Walks Manager.

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes from the meeting of 28 January 2024 were accepted.

3. Matters arising (not elsewhere on agenda)

- Treasurer is waiting for former treasurer to sign forms which will enable Chair to become a signatory on the bank account.
- Following recommendation in new Walk Leaders Handbook that walkers carry ICE information, Chair has now purchased and handed out keyrings to regular OWW walkers to attach to rucksacks, plus a pack of pre-printed short forms for visitors to complete.

4. Chair

- It is the turn of the OWW Chair to arrange the next Area AGM. This will take place in Eynsham village hall on Saturday 25 January 2025. It is expected that OWW would host a morning walk, with lunch in the hall afterwards. The AGM would take place in the afternoon followed by refreshments organised by OWW. Chair will need help arranging the hall and buying and setting up refreshments.
- OWW weekend away to Dunster covered below.
- Walk Leaders Handbook covered below.

5. Walks

- There have been 12 walks since the last meeting in January but only 5 leaders and no new leaders. The longest walk was 12 miles and the shortest 8. The average distance is 10.5 miles.

6. Navigation course feedback

- 8 people took the navigation course run by [Angelina Mountain Leader](#) on 20 April. The feedback was very positive, and the Committee agreed to book another session when the weather is warmer as there is a lot of stopping. Those on the waiting list for the last session should get priority. Committee discussed whether priority should also be given to potential new walk leaders, but it was decided that this could be difficult to manage.

Also, it is possible that taking the course might encourage people to lead walks even if they had never considered it beforehand. As an incentive, one suggestion was that anyone who led a walk for the first time after having done the training could be refunded the cost of the course.

- Committee members who attended the course noted that the leader asked the group at the start of the day to inform her if they suffered from any specific health conditions (that she listed). This prompted the Committee to discuss if OWW walk leaders should do something similar, but it was felt that this was too much responsibility on the walk leaders as volunteers. Also, if all walkers are encouraged to complete the ICE keyring/visitors form, such information might be covered there. However, the Committee agreed that it would be useful to **add a generic disclaimer at the top of the website for each walk about illness/ICE as well as some generic wording about suitable clothing and boots after people having turned up in trainers and sandals for muddy winter walks.**

7. Weekends away

- Chair has researched a weekend away to Exmoor National Park from 16-19 May 2025, staying at the [Yarn Market Hotel in Dunster](#). There are 28 rooms which can all be used as single rooms and facilities for walkers such as a boot room. The cost would be £115 per person per night for single occupancy and £95 per person for double occupancy. It was noted that we would not need to fill the hotel. The price includes breakfast and three-course evening meal but not lunch. There is limited parking at the hotel itself but there is a nearby National Trust car park where cars could be left during the day and various street parking for overnight. Car sharing would be strongly encouraged. There is a £100 non-refundable deposit payable to secure the booking. The Committee agreed that the hotel looked good, the drive not too far and the prices reasonable. **Chair to go ahead and pay deposit to secure booking.**
- The ex-Chair, now Publicity, confirmed that bookings for the Elan Valley weekend in August 2025 were at 20.

8. Socials

- There was a pool night at the end of last year and then a trip to the ballet in the last month. There have also been a couple of walks with a pub visit afterwards.
- The committee agreed that pub visits after walks are a good social opportunity as they are low key and require little organisation.
- Publicity Manager plans to add two more socials in the coming months which also require little organisation – a trip to the Mikron theatre and Charlbury music festival, both of which are free and don't require booking.
- Membership Secretary is also looking into arranging a social for Witney music festival – this is likely to be a Friday evening.

9. Membership

- 10 new members have joined the group since the last meeting. Four of these have come from other groups and six are new to Ramblers. There are currently 156 members in total.
- Ramblers has provided text that should now be added below the signature block when sending messages to group members which are not related to OWW walks or social events (i.e. 'uninvited' communications). The text reads *'You're receiving this*

communication because we believe that it would be of interest to you as a member. If you'd rather not receive similar information in future, please let us know. You can email membership@ramblers.zendesk.com or call (0)20 3961 3300. If anyone is unsure whether to include the statement, they can contact the Membership Secretary for guidance.

- Ramblers now recommends that committee members use a Google drive (or similar) to share documents containing personal details rather than adding them as an attachment to an email.

10. Committee (meetings)

Post-walk meetings are convenient, but it is sometimes difficult to find space inside a pub, especially for the size of the committee. For the meetings in warmer months (April/August), the committee agreed to continue with post-walk meetings as the group can sit outside where there is usually more space, but to go back to Zoom for the two meetings in colder months (Oct/Jan).

11. Finance

We have received £117 from Ramblers and have £537 in the bank. **Chair to arrange with Treasurer to claim for purchase of the ICE keyrings.**

12. Web

- Webmaster noted that the OWW website front page had mysteriously disappeared for a while but was now back.
- The video will be kept as, although old, it still provides useful information and attracts new members.
- Previous Webmaster still paying a direct debit for the phone transfer service but has not claimed for the cost and has not replied to emails about cancelling this. The current committee have not been able to find out when the contract is next up for renewal but, if the direct debit failed, we would be left with no phone number to use at short notice. Committee agreed that it would be best to start investigating a new service now, preferably with the same company. **Publicity Manager offered to investigate this.** In the meantime, the Chair will make a final attempt to contact the previous Webmaster by letter.

13. Publicity

- Publicity Manager usually posts both a pre- and post-walk message on the OWW Facebook group – the first aimed at encouraging people to come along, the second to share photos of the day. However, as the numbers coming on walks have been particularly high over the last months (regularly over 20 and often up to 25), plus the fact that many walk leaders prefer having a slightly smaller group, it was suggested that we stop posting a pre-walk message. The committee agreed to try this and see if it made any difference to numbers. The post-walk posts will continue as before.

14. Ramblers guidance/policies

- The Walk Leaders Handbook has been developed by Ramblers, with the primary aim of making walking safer. It was originally 28 pages, but this was reduced to a more manageable 8 pages after feedback. The biggest change is that from 15 May 2024, new walk leaders will have to go through a number of steps before they can lead, including online training sessions, each of 90 minutes. Walk leaders will have to sign up to 8

'principles' of walk leading but the Chair noted that we have already adopted most of the recommendations - e.g. with respect to the ratio of walk leaders to walkers, by always having a back marker and using a middle marker when numbers require it. Publicity and Vice Chair will take the online training for information.

- The Handbook also provided new guidance on risk assessments. Currently we are required to submit an RA for each walk, but from 15 May this will not be compulsory, and we could have a generic RA for our 'typical' walks instead. It was suggested that the generic RA for a 'typical' OWW walk could be made available on the website and that walk leaders could choose either to use it or submit their own if there were additional/different risks to cover. **Walks Manager to be consulted how he would prefer to manage risk assessments going forward.**

15. Area

- Area Rep attended the Area Council Meeting on 8th April 2024.
- The Walk Leaders Handbook was again a major topic, particularly risk assessments (discussed at 14 above).
- A first-aid course is planned in the Abingdon/Didcot area.
- Area finances are healthy and are expected to exceed the figure desired by Ramblers at year end. Area approved funding of steps at Ewelme.
- Ramblers finances are also healthy. 2/3 of the finances come from membership and around 1/3 from national postcode lottery.
- Membership is back to pre-Covid levels and rising.
- A high number of members choose to be allocated to the Oxfordshire Area but not to a group. They receive no information beyond a welcome with initial guidance. Area will ask for this option to be removed.
- Groups are required to keep a record of fixed assets, but OWW does not currently possess anything that qualifies.
- Abingdon reservoir and the Botley West solar farm are two major potential infrastructure/construction projects in the region which will affect many footpaths. Ramblers is not a political organisation so will limit its activity to investigating the implications on footpaths and campaigning to keep them open.
- A survey about Assemble will soon go out to chairs and secretaries asking for their views.
- The walks attendance register will be reviewed. Members do not want it to be mandatory.
- This year's Area picnic will be on Saturday 22 June.
- Area Rep to ask Area for more notice when there is a vote to make so that there is time to ask the OWW committee for their views beforehand.

16. AOB

- No other business raised.

17. Next meeting

- Due in July – exact date and venue to be confirmed.