Ramblers' Oxfordshire Area Annual Report 2010

Officers' reports

Chairman

Once again a very busy year for all concerned. As I don't make a speech at the Area AGM, may I take this opportunity to thank my Area EC colleagues and all other volunteers throughout the groups, committee members and walk leaders alike and others who help out selflessly, for example, at social events.

As Area chairman, the highlights for me were the Shirburn rally with six groups converging on the hill to enjoy a picnic hosted by the Henley & Goring group. No pressure on the Vale group for a similar event converging on Abingdon on 25 June 2011! The other was the walking of the Oxfordshire Way, in particular my own Vale group's linking up with Thame & Wheatley group at Tetsworth. The least said about the clay that day the better, see http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/ValeWalks.htm.

As usual I attended both days at the White Horse Show at the end of August. The public showed much interest, particularly in the 'Guess the distance' competition for which ten routes had been prepared, with three on display at any one time. Some people were so keen they asked for more than three goes. More details are here: http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/News.htm.

Pat Lonergan

Secretary

The Ramblers 75th Anniversary celebrations have given the groups a good opportunity to work together. In the summer we held a picnic celebration on Shirburn Hill and this was enjoyed so much that an Area Summer picnic will become an annual June event. In 2011 Vale group will host this with a picnic site chosen near the river where several walks can converge. In late autumn, between us, we walked the Oxfordshire Way, using this route for our baton Walks, where two groups met in the middle of a section and passed over the baton. This was often taken as an opportunity to share a drink or some birthday cake.

Working together is something we are doing as we prepare for hosting the General Council of Ramblers, to be held this year at Keeble College, Oxford. There is a small sub-committee which represents different groups which is dealing with the planning and preparation. For us, it will be an opportunity to showcase what Oxfordshire Ramblers feel we have achieved and what we regularly do for our members; provide a walks booklet for the whole area, provide walk leader training, work to keep our footpaths open provide first aid courses for walkers. We will have a display area for photographs etc, and our Chairman will give a presentation which will hopefully be supported by a power point presentation of aspects of Oxfordshire and the things we do. We will also provide a jazz band in the bar. This is all happening on April 16th/17th. If you would like to help please contact your groups' committee.

As we all know, the budget for the Oxfordshire ROW will be tightened, as yet we do not know quite by how much. As Ramblers we have always been part of the Big Society but now is more important than ever. On your walks, please carry secateurs for light trimming, this can make such a difference. Another way we can work together for the benefit of all.

Do you ever look at the main Ramblers website? It should remind you what the organisation is about. Please tell non-members about the benefits of belonging, as 2011 is planned to be a unified membership drive.

Susan Maguire

Treasurer

Our largest item of expenditure continues to be the production of the Area Walks Programme; the only other significant costs are South East Walker (down on the previous year due to format changes and postage savings as a result of it being sent out with Walk Magazine) and Group Funding. We reduced the cost of the Annual Report (as mentioned last year) by only sending out hard copies when specifically requested and having it available on the web-site.

Our Reserves are still at a healthy level, in excess of £4,000. We can make additional funds available for any special project which groups wish to consider.

Full accounts are included at the end of the report.

Peter Stone

Footpath Secretary

Committee

During the year we have welcomed Christine Tulloch (B&K) to the Footpaths Sub-Committee; she has replaced Tony Coleman. We still have no representative for West Oxon.

Footpath Work

Tony Clark (T&W) has continued to organise working parties in conjunction with Sydenham Parish Council, and Sydenham FP10 has now been cleared after problems with the landowner. Other clearances have been arranged by 20s&30s group (I have not yet had details). The effect of the cuts will surely be that we have to do far more cutting ourselves, particularly round overgrown stiles. Others are trying to set up working parties; it should be noted that such groups need to get backing from the County Council or a parish council in order to do the necessary consultation with the landowner, and ensure that proper risk assessments are carried out. Another reason for checking with the County Council is to ensure that they don't waste time and money going to the same place with their own crew.

Oxfordshire County Council

The Monitoring Group met in April and October. At the time of writing details of the impending cuts are not available, but the Countryside Service is considering all possible scenarios up to 40% cuts.

Work on the Thames Path in Oxford City has ended with the exception of a section near Grandpont which was being reworked when I was last in the area.

The Definitive Map (or, legally speaking, the working copy, which is more up-to-date) is now online, and it is possible to click on a location and report a problem.

The Countryside Service has completed its move to Eynsham (the large office block at SP428088) and the Rights of Way Section (which now also deals with commons registration), Field Officers and Tasks Team are now all in the same office. This, along with the large workshop area attached to the building, will make the department far more efficient.

The project to clear the paths between the Cherwell and Marston is on-going; so far the northern section (north of the link road) is clear and two gates have been erected by the river.

Definitive Map claims

The extension of Shiplake FP37 at Lashbrook under the railway has been confirmed, the landowner's appeal having failed in the High Court. The byway from the Radford-Kiddington road eastwards to White House Farm has also been confirmed. Proposals to modify the paths round Binfield Heath playing fields were the subject of a public inquiry on November 23; we await the result. The claim for extension of Watery Lane, Charlbury to Dean has been partially rejected and that for a bridleway at Tittenford Bridge, Wootton has been rejected; the claimant has appealed. An attempt to restrict the width of Lansdowne Road, Wootton has been referred to the Secretary of State.

New claims this year include one at Chalgrove Mill to extend FP8 over a bridge that was removed in 2001; a claim for the Trap Grounds railway crossing (which may be killed off by the Chiltern Railways inquiry); and a claim to upgrade Highmoor FP21 to bridleway.

The inquiry into the claim for a Town Green at Warneford Meadow, Oxford has been won by the applicants, the NHS having failed in its appeal to the High Court.

Planning and diversions

Diversions of Kidmore End FP3, Stanton Harcourt FP23, North Newington BR7, Goring FP17 (with a dedication of extra width along a narrow section) and Noke BR10 have been confirmed. The order on Cornbury FP1 at the lodge has been referred to the Secretary of State. The order for diversion of Benson FP6 at Preston Crowmarsh has been made along the original proposed route, with the path to be raised above the adjacent bog. The Order for Cottisford FP8/9 has been confirmed after the erection of fencing to screen the substation and the addition of some extra trees, but will not come into effect until other works (mostly the replacement of the gates) are complete. A proposed diversion at Frilford FP7 along the River Ock at Millett's Farm has been abandoned as the new owner is no longer interested. Checkendon FP12 at Lovegrove's Lane is to remain on its existing line. A diversion of Enstone BR19 to avoid the farmyard at Manor Farm has been abandoned after opposition from the Parish Council.

There is still no sign of a date for an inquiry into the proposed diversion at Bodicote Mill, which would remove the view of the mill stream (except via a detour) and move the path from a sunken lane which is

probably contemporary with the Domesday mill on this site (but is a mudbath).

We are still monitoring the progress of proposed major housing development at Didcot and the threat of an enormous reservoir south-west of Abingdon. The viaduct replacement at Wolvercote is complete, with the canal towpath back to normal.

The inquiry into Chiltern Railways' plans to upgrade the Oxford-Bicester line has started and will end at the end of January. We are trying to get Gosford FP4 connected to the station and Oddington FP6, which runs from Charlton-on-Otmoor to Weston-on-the-Green, saved from a mile-long diversion along the railway (with another half-mile to get back). We have put our case to the inquiry, in a joint appearance with Oxford Fieldpaths Society.

HS2 will clip the north-eastern corner of the county; we are at present waiting for details of the effects on footpaths to emerge. Adjoining Areas which are far more seriously affected are considering whether to join other organisations which oppose the project completely.

The wind farm at Fewcott has been approved; the applications at Cutteslowe Park and at Oddington near the former abbey earthworks have been abandoned; and the application at Horspath which is 350 metres from the nearest footpath, but will be seen from similar distances to Didcot, is (judging from the state of my inbox) generating almost as much heat as it will if it is ever built.

The proposed gating of Bulwarks Lane has been abandoned as one of the colleges no longer supports the idea. There is now a walkable route through the former TA Site to the Eastern Bypass.

The order for Breach Farm at Stanton St John has been made; the fact that other buildings have gone up without planning permission is not legally a reason for objecting to the order.

A diversion has been proposed on Uffington FP9 where houses have been built over the path in the days when people were more cavalier about getting the path diverted; the map attached to the proposals shows the new line partially running along the top of the school fence, which could be painful!

Obstructions and other matters

We now know that the paths at Castle Hill, Little Wittenham are being kept closed because of an infestation of Kletschmeria deusta which causes trees to snap suddenly about half way up the stem, which could be fatal for anyone walking underneath (I have seen similar snapped stems on silver birch); the plan is to open the paths when the affected trees have mostly died, when remaining affected trees can be cut down. We have for some time been trying to get Highmoor FP5 cleared; there is a new gate which is blocked by an impenetrable laurel bush at the eastern (pub) end. We are trying to get more publicity for the DEFRA Conservation Walks which are not marked on maps but can occasionally be found while wandering about (there is one between the two Hinkseys, and another on the canal opposite Shipton-on-Cherwell); these can be found on the DEFRA website.

Thanks

Finally, my thanks to the footpath secretaries for their hard work, and to anyone else who has helped with footpath matters.

David Godfrey

Membership Secretary

I offer these figures for what they are worth, and with the same amount of confidence as this time last year - practically nil! After a turbulent few years after the fiasco with the new central office computer system, we are perhaps closer to reconciling the true figures with actual membership. I note that three years ago national membership stood at just a few over 136,000; the total quoted at September 2010 was 121,500. However, it was apparent that in 2007 the numbers given were rather inflated.

Membership by groups 30th Sept 2010		
	2009	2010
Banbury & North Oxfordshire	276	257
Bicester & Kidlington	172	170
Didcot & Wallingford	193	163
Henley & Goring	326	315
Oxford City	439	413
Thame & Wheatley	155	147
Twenties & Thirties	119	88
Vale of White Horse	443	426
West Oxfordshire	243	217
Weekend Walkers	42	67
Unallocated	9	7
TOTAL	2417	2270

It has been discussed many times when out on our rambles. What is the reason for this decline? Many answers spring to mind. Firstly, there are many other attractions and distractions in our busy lives - particularly in the lives of the young. There are many other walking groups, such as Holiday Fellowship, CHA, Cotswold Wardens as well as excellently promoted health walks. There are also more magazines and newspaper supplements which, quite rightly, encourage this excellent pastime. And how many couples, over the years, have joined for a year to see what is involved in navigating their way through the footpath system, find out it is not all that difficult with a bit of common sense, and then leave us? Not to mention, of course, the ageing profile of those already in the RA. This Area membership secretary has no answers in how to arrest the decline, except to state the obvious: keep passing on the message of the benefits of joining the Ramblers.

Peter Offord

Access

Appropriately, six of the Oxfordshire groups celebrated the Ramblers' 75th Anniversary by taking different walking routes to meet up on Shirburn Hill, the site of twentieth century protests about access. Serving as a reminder of the successful outcome of the CRoW Act, our toasts to Ramblers were much appreciated by all present!

Nationally, Ramblers contributed to the lobbying for the successful legislation of the Marine and Coastal Access Act last year and the South Downs National Park, which came into being on 1st April 2010. They have subsequently been involved in consultations about their implementation. Centrally, the Ramblers is also preparing to contribute to the review of the rights of access under the CRoW Act which will start at the end of 2011.

Nearer to home, the proposal to enclose and periodically graze Kingwood Common in South Oxfordshire to improve the biodiversity of the glades is now subject to a Public Inquiry to take place in April 2011. Although this is a contentious issue locally, the committee takes the view that this is for a positive purpose and does not involve a permanent construction nor one which will seriously damage access or countryside.

John Case

Countryside

The national spending review and budget cuts are clearly likely to set back the whole range of rights of way and countryside protection. In common with other departments of Oxfordshire CC, the Countryside Service has been asked to plan for 25% cuts. The Ramblers are lobbying as an organisation and have urged all members to do so jointly and individually. On behalf of our Committee, I have done so through the DEFRA and OCC websites as well as Ramblers' own.

Twelve months ago it was by no means certain that the massive 15000 house eco-town at Weston Otmoor, to which we and many others objected, was completely rejected by the government. Now, however, the alternative plans for the eco-town development in NW Bicester have gained approval and funding from the new government as well as strong local support. The plans envisage 5000 new homes in a phased development which could see construction start in 2011 but will take up to 30 years to complete. The proposals appear to be imaginative and sympathetic and the new communities will grow around existing habitation. 40% of the area will be kept in green corridors and use existing tracks and the single public footpath to connect to Bicester and the countryside.

On the other side of Bicester, the Defence Estates are proposing to develop two sites for perhaps as many as 1650 houses, commercial premises and requisite infrastructure. It remains to be seen if the countryside is likely to be adversely affected but it appears that only one footpath is in their vicinity and will probably not be directly affected.

On housing generally, the new government has announced its intention to abolish Regional Development Agencies and has already given the responsibility of developing and implementing housing strategies to District and City Councils. To give an incentive for house building, they have introduced the New Homes Bonus which will benefit councils directly for new developments and is likely to ensure significant increases in housing stock overall.

During this year, on behalf of the Area EC, I have looked at a number of proposed developments and contributed to the planning process of several of them ranging from a new Astroturf hockey pitch for a school (withdrawn), a new house to be built within historic remains (withdrawn), District Council core housing strategy and most recently an array of photo voltaic cells to generate power (supported). Currently, I am

examining a proposal to erect a large turbine by the village of Horspath.

On other matters, after the Public Inquiry in the summer, the county council has signed a contract with Viridor to process residual waste and the Environment Agency has issued an Environmental Permit for the energy from waste plant proposed at Ardley. The re-submitted planning application for the plant has been passed, subject to Secretary of State approval.

The public inquiry into Thames Water's proposed reservoir at Steventon was completed in late August. Quite apart from countryside issues, the Environment Agency expressed reservations about Thames Water's assumptions about future demand, indicating the figures may be inflated. The outcome of the Inquiry will go to the Secretary of State in November and the decision published in the New Year.

The largest infrastructure project, HS2, is the proposal for a new non-stop high speed train link from London to Birmingham, perhaps also to Heathrow and the far north. The currently preferred route for this uses tunnels and viaducts and goes from Euston through the Chilterns towards Aylesbury, through a corner of Oxfordshire (near Mixbury north of Bicester), then across green belt towards Solihull and Birmingham. This is a huge project with all sorts of strategic and practical implications. A few of the issues are: Increasing capacity and the economic case; AONB and countryside protection; footpaths; maximum speed or maximum carbon saving; beyond Birmingham or not?

The proposal has the support of all main political parties and the Area EC considers that we should not oppose this outright: We need significant extra rail capacity. The current rail network has almost reached saturation and more use of already overcrowded roads would be detrimental to the environment we walk in. Higher speed rail could also reduce the growth of air travel with its heavy carbon output, although there is a discussion needed on optimum train speeds. However, we need to look at the plans carefully to ensure that the proposals are challenged for alternatives where they would damage footpaths or beautiful areas. To quote CPRE: 'HS2 is aiming for world record speeds. Surely it should aim for world record environmental standards?'.

John Case

Walks Coordinator

The Summer and Winter 2010 programmes comprised 379 and 328 walks (including a few other events) respectively, running from April 2010 to March 2011, a total of 707! The actual walks totalled 691.

Of the 691 walks, 669 were in the middle categories, Leisurely and Moderate.

Banbury & North Oxfordshire Group submitted the most number of walks during the year with 152 walks, but expressed per number of members, the Weekend Walkers pipped them with 44 walks submitted, from 67 members, and that with walks in February and March still to come because of special arrangement with their group!

The most walks goes to Len Lamb of Banbury & North Oxfordshire group with 18 walks, followed by Susan Maguire of Henley & Goring group with 15. 13 leaders submitted 10 or more walks.

200 leaders, couples or other sets of leaders submitted walks averaging 3.5 walks per 'leader', a slight but insignificant decrease on last year. The shortest distance was 2.5 miles, the longest 20.5 and the average 7.5, yet again, exactly the same as previous years! I will add this year that the average is higher in the summer than the winter, 7.7 versus 7.3.

52% of the walks were at the weekend, a 1% increase on last year so we are still catering well for our working members. There were 115 walks on a Thursday, another increase on last year. There were 48 walks on a Tuesday, slightly fewer than last year though this compares with 139 on a Wednesday, so, yet again, even more on a Tuesday would be nice. The Wednesday total is an increase of 2 on last year but once again is outshone by Sunday with 216 walks, nearly a third of the walks!

It still appears that hardly anyone wants to lead on a Monday (13), so, again, I think we should concentrate on giving more choice mid-week, Tuesday through Thursday. Again, ideally, I would like a group to commit to regular walks on a Tuesday, or at least more leaders doing do.

Thanks for all the hard work put in by all concerned, especially, yet again, to Peter Offord of Banbury & North Oxfordshire group who typed in both sets of his group's walks - fantastic! One can list walks on the Area website www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk by clicking on the appropriate navigation entries.

During the year we introduced the Bus friendly information to the walks and an expansion of the dogs data by allowing "L" for "Dogs on leads please" and "S" for "Dogs on short leads please". Details are in the

programme, particularly regarding the Bus friendly information.

Pat Lonergan

Website

On the Area website, www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk, seven of the eight geographically-based groups now have multiple-pages, with Henley & Goring still 'leading the way' with seven pages. Please bear in mind that the 20s&30s and Weekend Walkers have their own websites anyway. The site now comprises 42 pages.

The Start Places pages were updated this year, that is, on an annual basis as agreed. There are now 641 such entries with Oxfordshire out of a total of 953, but the other 312 are outside Oxfordshire and have not been checked, although they appear in the alphabetic pages. The index page is:

http://www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk/startplaces.htm

As a matter of policy, this reference is not in the website menu, so I advise you to put it in your Favorites (sic) if using Internet Explorer or to bookmark it if using Firefox or Google Chrome.

Pat Lonergan

Group reports

Banbury & North Oxfordshire

At our 2009 AGM held at the Bowling Green Steakhouse Restaurant, Banbury, two committee members, Evelyn Ruck and David Godfrey, stood down after many years sterling service on the committee and we elected two new members, Jim Tipping and Mike Peel. Other existing committee members and officers were re-elected.

At 30th September 2009 membership of the group stood at 276. Over the past year membership has declined, in line with the overall reduction in membership nationally as well as in the rest of Oxfordshire. Current membership is 257 according to Central Office data.

As usual our walks programme is full, varied and well supported. Our winter 2009 programme included walks on each Sunday and Wednesday. Over the Christmas/New Year period we organised twelve walks which also saw, for the first time, a walk on Christmas Day. We had 90 walks in the summer programme - a record for the group. Of these walks Jim Tipping led eight and Len Lamb nine. Many thanks to all the leaders for the excellent walks which they put on.

After last year's success we are repeating the "Twelve Days of Christmas" walks from Thursday 23rd December until Monday 3rd January 2011, totalling 90.3 miles. Our Boxing Day walk will be in memory of Norman Kearse who was a regular leader of Boxing Day walks for B&NO.

Norman Kearse, who had been an active member of the RA for over 40 years died on 19th April 2010, aged 92. Norman was involved with the working party, clearing footpaths, building stiles, etc., at the time when Dick Smith was chairman in the 1970s and 1980s. He also coordinated the Wednesday afternoon walk programme for B&NO and led many walks. His funeral was attended by over 40 ramblers which shows the high esteem in which he was held.

We celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Ramblers on Saturday 30th October 2010 with a lunch at the Chacombe village hall which was attended by 77 ramblers. After a most delicious meal we were entertained by fellow ramblers, finishing off the festivities with country dancing.

I thank all members of the committee for their support and hard work during the year.

Charles Woolland

Bicester & Kidlington

Our 2009 AGM at Hethe was attended by 15 people, followed by an informative talk given by Pedro Collins on fungi.

In addition to our usual varied walks programme, our goup had a weekend away in May, when nine people went to Rutland Water, and stayed at the same B&B as the year before.

We organised another quiz evening at Sturdy's Castle which was enjoyed by all who attended. Also we had a barbeque in Fringford.

We had a stall at the Bicester Carnival again. Mary Gough organised a publicity stall at the Banbury Museum on the subject of the history of the Ramblers. For Get Walking Day we had a stall and lead a walk from Sainsbury's in Kidlington.

Linda Chaundy has stepped down from being our Walks Organiser, our thanks to her. The lack of volunteers to fill our committee is a cause of concern. Perhaps having a membership of about 170 is just not

enough for a viable group, especially as we are not able to have a walk organised on every weekend.

Colin Morgan

Didcot & Wallingford

The Didcot & Wallingford Group has had another good year. We put our usual number of walks in the Area Programme and these have had an average attendance of 12 - 20 ramblers. Our weekend away this year was in late-October, when we weren't sure we would get the weather, but it turned out to be a gloriously sunny weekend. We stayed at a Warner's Leisure Hotel in Cricket St Thomas and went walking on both the Dorset Coastal Path and inland footpaths just over the county border in Devon. Our contribution to the Area Baton Walk was the leg from Pyrton to Pishill on a beautifully cold and crisp day in late-November and a soup lunch with the Henley & Goring group before handing over the baton. One committee member stood down at our AGM and another couple indicated they might look to come off next year. Our membership numbers have remained fairly static over the year with almost as many new members joining as leaving. We are already making plans for a weekend away in the Brecon Beacons in September 2011.

Nick Morley

Henley & Goring

As in other years Henley & Goring members have enjoyed a lively and varied programme of walks, trips and social events. Around thirty walks leaders take advantage of our lovely area to put on a varied local programme twice a year. We hold a walk leaders' meeting and supper to keep people up to date and the annual Christmas dinner was a very jolly affair this year as usual. Our members continue to come forward with ideas for trips away both in UK and abroad. In 2010 groups went to Cardigan in June, the South Downs in July, Yorkshire 3 peaks in September and Tuscany in October. Already organised for 2011 are an Easter trip to Montgomery, Dorset in September and Turkey in October with the possibility of a trip to Ireland in June. Long distance linear walks continue to be popular. The Cotswold Way was walked over a series of weekends last winter, in summer it was the Chiltern Way and this winter it is the Wessex Ridgeway. These walks have become almost too popular and as the numbers wanting to take part increase the committee is having to think about alternatives!

Get Walking Day was a great success with our colourful stand in Henley's Falaise Square attracting a lot of attention and new members for the following day's history themed walk in the area. We joined other Oxfordshire groups on Shirburn Hill on a hot day in June for the Ramblers' 75th birthday celebration picnic - a great day out. We collected the baton from Didcot & Wallingford on a cold day in November to complete the Oxfordshire leg of the Baton Walk. Many members join Chiltern Society working parties doing invaluable work to keep our paths open and well signed. Action on footpaths by the authorities takes a long time. There has been some progress on Highmoor 5 (after 5 years) and although Shiplake 38 is agreed there is still no sign.

Social activities are an integral part of the programme. The Chantry House lecture at the end of January is a well-established annual event as is the summer BBQ, this year accompanied by a jazz band supplied by one of our members. A skittles evening added a new dimension to the programme and our AGM supper and social evening was very well attended as usual. We use e-mail lists to facilitate car sharing for walks and the Arts Group publicises its activities in the same way. Malcolm Wade acts as the spider in the centre of our e-mail web sending out messages to members about walks, events, activities, and appeals or just keeping us up to date.

There have been some changes on the committee with two long serving members standing down. Chris Corti is taking over from Alan Reeves who has been treasurer for 8 years and Joan Clark will act as Area representative taking over from John Case who has had that role for 6 years.

Joan Clark

Oxford

The group has provided a varied and imaginative calendar of walks. Elizabeth Yates has able and enthusiastic leaders for practically every Wednesday in the year. There have been interesting and lively walks during the week and at weekends. Don Manley's walks, including 'quiet periods', have allowed people to hear birdsong! The Roman Way series of 17 monthly walks ended in September 2010, the team having started the 174-mile triangle on the theme of Roman roads in April 2009.

The committee have welcomed Tony Twigger as the new group secretary, thanks to Colin Redman for filling the breach for several months. Welcome to

Janet Caldwell who takes over from the efficient work of David Fotherby in co-ordinating the non-Wednesday walks. Thanks to all the committee members for willing and reliable teamwork.

There has been a rise in membership to 421 in November. Thanks to Helen and Barry Burlingham's work in distributing RA programmes to all the county libraries. Our group received and handed on the baton in November and are looking forward to leading walks as part of Oxfordshire's hospitality at the General Council meeting in April.

Elaine Steane

Thame & Wheatley

Thame & Wheatley AGM took a different form this year. An evening meeting at Christchurch Hall, Thame, followed by an excellent speaker and supper, seemed to appeal to members, and might possibly set the pattern for future annual meetings.

During the year, the group has enjoyed a full programme of walks, well-supported social events, excellent publicity, and a greater effort in keeping local paths in good order.

Walks leaders contributed 41 wa1ks to the programme, all of which were well attended. Sadly, Dave Mould, our founder walks organiser, decided to call it a day earlier in the year. At a special luncheon in Thame, the committee paid warn tribute to Dave's efforts during the past fourteen years. Fortunately, Bob Ward volunteered the role. His appointment was confirmed at the AGM.

A beetle drive and BBQ in July was appreciated by all those attending and for the first time the group organised an 'awayday', walking in the Malvern Hills. Members also responded well to the events organised to celebrate the Ramblers 75th anniversary.

On the publicity front, Ruth Cornish continued with the excellent work of keeping members well-informed and publicising our walks, something which is vital in the continual effort to attract new members. The committee also got behind the 'Get Walking' weekend, featuring a stand at Thame Town Hall on Saturday, 22nd May, and a Sunday walk. A number of new members were recruited, largely attracted by the generous introductory fee offer.

Chris Bignal, treasurer and membership secretary reports the finances in a satisfactory state, and membership currently standing at 147, a small decline on the previous year's figures.

Tony Clark, footpath officer, maintained his efforts to improve access to footpaths in the area. Among a number of successes, a particularly popular path from Sydenham to Thame Park was re-established after lengthy negotiation with the landowner. Tony also led committee members and helpers in an increased number of footpath clearance exercises during the year.

The AGM regretfully saw Janet Noyce standing down. The committee expressed its appreciation to founder secretary Janet for fourteen years of capable work for the group. Ann Harman agreed to take over, and was elected to the post at the AGM.

In summary it has been an interesting and rewarding 2010, largely due to the contribution of our dedicated committee, all of whom look forward with confidence to the coming year.

Mike Smith

Twenties & Thirties

After an icy start to the year when we had to postpone the group's AGM due to snow, it has been a good year for the group, which has now established its own identity following the split due the creation of the Weekend Walkers group a couple of years ago. One of the highlights of the year has been the celebration of the group's 10th Anniversary in July.

Throughout the year, the group had a busy programme of walks and social events with walks most Sundays attended by an average of 10-20 people. During the summer months, we held a number of short summer evening walks, mostly on Fridays.

There have been a few joint walks with other groups including the Weekend Walkers and the Chilterns 20s&30s. This has brought some more variety to our programme as well as some fresh ideas about running the group. A few new walk leaders have come forward this year, which has been really appreciated by all, especially the small set of members who lead most walks. Over the course of the coming year, the group should carry on encouraging more members to lead walks.

We held two weekends away, one camping in Dorset and the other at the YHA in the Gower, where we took advantage of the group's YHA membership.

Some new members have joined since the beginning of the year but it remains difficult to track exact numbers due to continuing issues with membership at central office. The Get Walking Day

walk with a special discount held in May contributed to gaining some new members.

On the social side, the group enjoyed a lot of events including a ghost walk in Oxford, meals out, bowling outings, an outdoor play and joint ceilidhs with the Chiltern 20s&30s group.

Apart from these group activities, a lot of work has gone on behind the scenes to ensure that the group works smoothly and I would like to thank all Committee members for giving up their time to run the group. Three committee members stepped down at the recent AGM but we fortunately found four volunteers to replace them. One item that deserves a particular mention is the group's constitution that was voted on during the AGM. We also took the opportunity of working on our constitution to amend our name to "Oxon 20s30s Walkers" rather than "Oxon 20s30s Walking".

Alice Marten

Vale of White Horse

In autumn 2010 we ran another Leadership Navigation and Planning course. Good to get enough students after falling short in 2009. In 2011 we must make sure we don't run it in Abingdon during the Abingdon Fair though; the traffic and noise on the first night were a problem. The Vale Group also held its regular events like the Spring Meeting, this year in Appleton with a talk and slides on the Falklands and the visit by the London Blind Ramblers. We had a stand at the Uffington Show over the August Bank Holiday again so thanks to the other groups who helped us staff it.

Our walks programme organised by Maria Simpson is stable in number of walks but from a slowly reducing number of leaders. I appeal to members to submit walks to the programme. You all enjoy going on walks led by others so it is only fair so take your turn. I'm happy to advise you on routes or other planning aspects. If you find it difficult to plan so far ahead, get together with one or two others to reduce the chance that any one of you cannot make the planned date.

We have increased our short Thursday walks this year leading to fewer walks on other days. I would also ask for some more weekend and longer walks to be volunteered to maintain a good mix. In the winter programme I have been leading the Wantage Thursday walks by myself. If I cannot find a few more volunteers to lead then we may not cover all the months in the summer programme.

The biggest threat to our walking in future years is probably cuts in rights-of-way funding by Oxfordshire county council. I haven't yet heard details from OCC but some other counties are scrapping their teams entirely. We should lobby for the retention of this function, albeit at a reduced level, as a good walking network contributes to health and tourism as well as recreation.

Happy walking in the year ahead!

John Gordon

Weekend Walkers

The Weekend Walkers Group has grown steadily over the last year - we officially have 68 members on our return from central office. New people are attending nearly every walk and several have expressed a willingness to join the organisation. I can put this popularity down to several reasons: our varied walks programme which attempts to cater to everyone's taste and ability, and the recent publicity drive which saw our new group publicity leaflet posted at various locations in the area. Our web site too actively promotes the group and receives a large number of hits. As a group we try very hard to be welcoming and encouraging to those on their first outing with the Ramblers or those who have moved from another part of the country.

I would like to thank all the walk leaders for putting on walks over the last year; this involves time and expense along with the pre walk "recce", all given voluntarily. We have had 27 different walk leaders this year leading one or more walks; this is roughly 1 in 3 of the membership, we always need more people to step up and lead walks. We all have busy lives and if everyone takes part it shares the workload and adds variety to the walks programme - all contributions are welcome! Last year we offered 66 walks with a total distance of 561 miles. Our walks coordinator Vanessa Corrick has done a sterling job maintaining and managing the walks programme within the group and liaising with Pat Lonergan at Area. She will be stepping down from this post at the AGM after two years in the role and on behalf of the group I would like to thank her for her time and effort.

Five weekends away have been organised this year - to the Lake District, Pembrokeshire, Yorkshire, the Gower and the Wye Valley (which also featured canoeing). These weekends were all very popular and oversubscribed. I would like to thank all the people who organised and helped run them. Hopefully we can

match or exceed the number of weekends away next year but again we always need more new people to get involved in organising these outings.

In June members of the group were involved in a Ramblers 75th anniversary celebration where groups from across the county lead walks from different start locations to a picnic site on Shirburn Hill. Various goodies and alcohol were shared and consumed on the sunny hillside by everyone who took part. In July we held a joint walk with the Oxon 20s & 30s in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the formation of that group. This event was well attended by both sides; post walk birthday cake and drinks were consumed in the Vine at Cumnor to mark the occasion. We are also taking part in the Baton walk later in November to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Ramblers.

A wide range of social activities have also been offered over the year including various pub nights, punting, some entertaining plays in Oxford, wine tasting, tribute bands, meals out and the chance to swing through the tree tops in Buckinghamshire. Many thanks to the people who organised these socials and to those who supported the events.

I would like to thank all the committee for their hard work and effort over the year, without this effort and dedication the group would not function. In addition to Vanessa, Sam Band is standing down as membership secretary at the AGM and I would like to thank Sam for her work over the last two years.

Looking forward to the year ahead, I hope we can encourage new people to take up committee vacancies and that we can continue to offer a varied and exciting programme of walks and social events. I have also been asked to help in organising the Ramblers General Council which is being held in Oxford in 2011 and will be looking for volunteers to get involved in various roles.

Happy walking!

Gavin Powell

Income & Expenditure Account for year to 30 September 2010

	£	*2009*
INCOME		
Allocation from Ramblers National Fund	6,658	5,895
Walk Program advertisements	515	440
Bank Interest	4	37
Share Dividends	9	18
Sundry		
TOTAL INCOME	7,186	6,390
EXPENSES		
Walks Programmes	3,590	3,354
South East Walker	965	1,794
Annual Report & AGM	115	1,790
Group funding	1,592	2,125
Campaigns & Casework	7	81
Publicity	173	516
Management & Administration	335	394
TOTAL EXPENSES	6,777	10,054
EXCESS / (DEFICIT) of INCOME over EXPENDITURE	409	(3,664)

Balance Sheet as at 30th September 2010

	£	*2009*
RESERVES		
At start of year	3,910	7,574
Add Surplus / (Deficit) for year	409	(3,664)
At 30th September 2010	4,319	3,910
ASSETS		
Shares in Ramblers Holidays	442	433
Bank Balance	3,607	5,284
Debtors	270	335
	4,319	6,052
Less Creditors	0	2,142
Net Assets at 30th September 2010	4,319	3,910

The accounts are prepared in accordance with guidelines from The Ramblers' Association.

The area's main income comes from a grant from The Ramblers Central Funds based on an expenditure budget.

Cost savings have been made this year mainly by not distributing copies of the annual report to all members; the report is available on line or hard copies can be requested.

Peter C Stone Treasurer
25th October 2010

Independent Examiner's Statement

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group Independent Examination Guidelines, I consider the Oxfordshire Area accounts to have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year to 30th September 2010.

Signed Lorraine Oates

Date 28th October 2010

22 St Peters Road
Abingdon OX14 3SJ