



Thames Valley LDWA

Committee Report for Annual General Meeting 14th January 2024

Chairman's Report

I am approaching the end of my five years as Chairman and can only regret, as Duncan enlarges on in his report, that my term has marked a decline in the number of people prepared to take a leadership role. On a personal level, it has also marked a decline in my fitness, meaning that I have been unable, for several months, to keep up the pace for even our slower walks.

We owe tremendous gratitude to all members of our (diminishing) committee, but particularly to Duncan and Graham, without whose work the Group is likely to have collapsed completely. Thanks, also to our (also diminishing) band of leaders, who have kept our programme reasonably well filled, often at very short notice. Thanks, finally, to those who have helped in other ways, such as catering and marshalling on our events.

For the first time for several years we ran a checkpoint on the hundred and I would particularly thank those who helped with that, which proved a boost to our finances, as we received a share of the overall profits of the event, which are never predictable, so this cannot be relied on as a source of income. We have offered to run a checkpoint in Suffolk or Norfolk in 2025

By the time of the AGM we will, hopefully, have identified my successor. It need not be an onerous job but, without a Chairman, the Group could be deemed non-viable and be wound up. Perhaps even more important, though, at least in a financial sense, is to identify somebody to coordinate our challenge events, which are our only reliable source of income.

During the year the National Executive Committee asked group officers to bring their constitutions into line with the model constitution for local groups. I realised that there were some unsatisfactory features of the model and have been working with the General Secretary and others on an improved version, on which the version the AGM will be asked to approve is based.

John Esslemont

Secretary's Report

The Secretary fulfils a number of roles in our group in addition to the mundane (such as minute writing and hall bookings) and in particular picks up the 'slack', which has been significant this year. This report is thus a bit of a mish-mash of different things that I was responsible for or led. If I was to summarise my role in 2023 in two words, they would be 'managing decline'. The biggest negative of the year was of course the demise of the Oxon and the most depressing parts of my job comprised the failed search for a new Oxon Event Coordinator, plus dealing with messages of disappointment from members of other LDWA groups as it became clear there would not be an

event in 2024. Next in that list was the search for a new Chairman (or indeed for any new committee members).

I recently attended the Local Groups weekend in Dorset and found that much of what we have seen in the last year is reflected across other groups. Membership, on the one hand, keeps on increasing both at national and local level. TV now has nearly 1000 primary and associate members, of which 394 are primary members that opt to receive our emails. However, it is becoming clearer that the vast majority of these join for reasons other than attending local walks and are just automatically assigned to us by their postcode. On the other hand, numbers are falling across the LDWA at the top of the pyramid, i.e. of those willing to lead walks, serve on committees, organise events etc. Its clear from the questionnaire we did two years ago that, relative to other groups, our active members are primarily interested in social walks, with lesser interest in weekends away, challenges, the 100 etc. If we rank ourselves against all the groups in terms of number of social walks per year, we rank third behind the Irregulars and London, though we are low on other metrics related to other events. And we probably lead in the provision of what were termed 'WASP' (walking at slower pace) walks. The biggest positive of the Dorset event was the enthusiasm to create an LDWA App, similar to those used by the Ramblers and marathon runners, from which you could easily find walks across the country and on which walk registers would be recorded so we could all view our personal stats. In the event that the IT budget could not cover this, this could be funded from a large bequest that the LDWA has received. So watch this space.

On the more positive side, I took on the coordination of a new event, the Marlow Donkey (only the second time we have done two events in a year – remember the 'Red Kite Kanter' anyone?). While neither seeking or achieving the standards of the Oxon 40, at least not for those favouring a long event, this was undoubtedly a success and possibly set a more sustainable level for the current volunteer base of the group. So we have committed to hold this again on 29 September 2024. Perhaps in another year, we could organise two events of this format or also a more simplified Oxon. Anyway in this paragraph I am really describing the job of a 'Challenge Events Coordinator', and we really need someone to take on this role and chart a way forward from 2025 onwards (2024 now being covered).

To end on another positive, one thing that has been a hit this year is cream and church tea stops. You only have to look at Graham's table of attendances for walks to immediately recognise the dates of these and of course of the Xmas party, which continues to be well attended and supplied. As Sarah will report, despite having no Oxon income, we have agreed to continue the £600 budget for the teas and to keep the Xmas party charges to the nominal level that will minimise no-shows. And of course we have a multicultural variety of culinary skills in the group, that has featured at the Christmas party, AGM and our challenge walks. Finding volunteers for these has been the easiest part of my job, so thanks to all these contributors – you know who you are!

Duncan Macgregor

Treasurer's Report

In summary the total cash balance including stocks increased by £1,141.87 year on year. The increase in funds was driven by 2 successful challenge events, the Oxon 40/20 & the new Marlow Donkey and a share of the profits from the 100 event, offset in part by other costs including subsidising a number of social events including the walks tea & cake and the 2022 Christmas lunch.

The overall benefit of the 2023 Oxon 40/20 was £863. Within this £923 impacted 2022/23, offset in part by £60 of costs relating to hall deposits were paid in the prior year. The new Marlow Donkey challenge event generated £506.

In the year the group received £500 from the organisers of the EBB 100 event for the support in organising a checkpoint, this considerably exceeded the expenses incurred. It should be noted

that even in the years when we run a checkpoint this is not a dependable source of income as it depends on the profitability of the event.

It should be noted that there were 2 sources of income that are not guaranteed going forward, the Oxon 40/20 and a share of the profits from the 100 event. These contributed £1,423 to the cash increase in the year. Excluding these the cash balance decreased by £258 which reflects the intention to subsidise social events.

A stock take of badges & mugs was completed and this has been included in the report. Overall, the Groups financial position is good and means that we have reserves in place to ensure we are financially stable and also enables us to subsidise social events.

I would like to thank Lynda Ledger for her independent review of the accounts.

Sarah Easingwood-Wilson

Note: The accounts, as approved by the independent examiner, appear below. The copy signed by the treasurer and independent examiner can be made available for inspection on request.

Cashbook: 1.11.2022 - 31.10.2023

LDWA Thames Valley

Summary	31.10.20	31.10.21	31.10.22	31.10.23	Stock / Assets
Stock Value	£171.50	£158.08	£120.80	£70.10	Mugs 17 @ £1.494 £25.40
Reserve Account Balance	£2,429.96	£2,430.20	£2,432.52	£2,459.19	40/20 Badges 30 @ £1.49 £44.70
Business Account Balance	£2,756.07	£4,315.21	£4,845.60	£6,011.50	
Cash in Hand	-	-	-	-	
Total	£5,357.53	£6,903.49	£7,398.92	£8,540.79	£70.10
Increase / (Decrease)	(£1,728.14)	£1,545.96	£495.42	£1,141.87	Sale of items during the year: 10 mugs & 24 badges, the proceeds from these of £68 are included in the cashbook
Movement for the Year					
Cash inflow		£5,309.46			
Cash outflow		(£4,143.56)			
Add reserve interest		£26.67			
Less stock reduction		(£50.70)			
Total		£1,141.87			

Business Account Cashflow		Cash Inflow	Cash Outflow	Net Cashflow
Oxon 40/20: 2023	Income received & costs paid in the 2022/23 year relating to the 2023 event	£3,732.66	£2,809.26	£923.40
Marlow Donkey 2023		£1,006.80	£500.98	£505.82
Christmas Lunch 2022	(1)	(£10.00)	£209.92	(£219.92)
Christmas Lunch 2023	Deposits received in the 2022/23 year	£80.00	-	£80.00
AGM 2023		-	£132.90	(£132.90)
Walks tea & cake		-	£372.00	(£372.00)
Group 100 event 2023	LDWA Group contributed £500 to Thames Valley for supporting the event	£500.00	£68.50	£431.50
National Meeting		-	£50.00	(£50.00)
Other		-	-	-
Total		£5,309.46	£4,143.56	£1,165.90

Note - Cash inflow is net of any refunds given and the cash outflow is net of any refunds received

(1) The 2022 Christmas Lunch was paid for by the Group. A £5 refundable deposit was paid to reserve a place, the £10 negative cash inflow relates to returning deposits to individuals who paid their deposit in the 2021/22 year

Walks Co-ordinator's Report

We are still managing to offer at least one walk on Sundays, but the B walks have become more sporadic; Wednesday walks are still offered occasionally. The "tea & cakes" walks continue to attract many people, and we hope to see more during the next Spring and Summer.

As with last year the walks have been possible only because a core of leaders has been leading most of the walks, so **please** consider helping out. We have a sizeable number of past Oxon 20 walks which have descriptions and GPX files on our web site, and many of our previous walks have GPX files available in the LDWA Walks Database, to which I add routes and photographs when available.

The average number attending a walk in 2023 was 10 for Sunday A, 8 for Sunday B and 8 for Wednesday. (Last year's figures were 9, 8, 6.) We had 46 A walks, 26 B and 12 Wednesday.

Graham Croucher

Oxon 40/20 Co-ordinator's Report

Overall the event was a success with positive feedback from entrants and it made over £800 for Thames Valley funds.

Many thanks to Trish and Duncan/David for help organising it and all the other volunteers that helped deliver it on the day but I had to take on additional roles to organise and deliver the event.

Going forward, as we were not able to find anybody to manage the volunteers to assist me with running the 2024 event, and combined with the difficulty in organising the car parks, then I'm unwilling to take on so many roles to deliver an event in 2024. This has led to the decision not to run the Oxon 40/20 in 2024.

Andrew Beck

Logistics Officer's Report

Several events in 2023, namely the TV AGM, Oxon 40/20 and Marlow Donkey, required the use of equipment from the Thames Valley equipment store. The final event of the year will be the Xmas lunch in December.

Duncan and Andrew keep most of the TV equipment and have made my logistic officer role relatively easy by keeping excellent up to date records, after each event, of where everything is stored, and what will be required for the next event. In discussion with Duncan I have purchased replacement supplies where required and topped up non perishable food supplies.

In many cases those who had offered to cater, Shahina, Trish, Christine and many more, have brought their own equipment which has helped considerably when organising events.

Anushka Howell