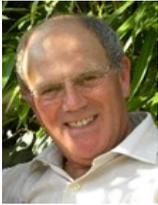


# Oxford Health Service Retirement Fellowship



# Editor's Pitch



Where have these first 3 months of 2016 gone? Those lucky enough to get tickets had a really great start to the New Year wining, dining and laughing at the Christmas/New Year Lunch at the Cotswold Lodge Hotel. Well done Julie! Another successful arrangement. We also should compliment the hotel staff on their service, I think they look after us and our antics really well. As for parading our outrageous bottoms, whatever next?

In January I changed the car. It's not that I get bored with them, nor do I ever see them as an investment, quite the reverse. I tend to update them before devaluation means I need to pay more than I'm prepared to. This time I took a big step and changed manufacturer from a well known French make to a well known German make. I had driven the same make for about 30 years and this time having read some reviews thought it was time to switch. It has been a whole new learning experience. The technology now integrated into car design can be quite different between manufacturers. Yes, they may do the same thing, but the way it's achieved can be very different. So far my thoughts are that French logic suits me better than German. Maybe that I've just got older, stuck in my ways and a slower learner. We'll see in a couple of years when it comes around to the next change.

February included a visit to the NEC and the Camping and Caravanning Exhibition. We had gone to review French camping sites, but spent more time on stands selling accessories. Needless to say we bought at least two things that have subsequently been sold on via Ebay. By the time you read this Annette and I will have been on our first caravanning weekend of 2016. There are others planned (including six weeks in France), but this expedition includes our grandchildren. You will be able to decide for yourselves at the April meeting whether this went well...

Also during February I spent an evening at Christ Church College, Oxford attending the ceremony for those receiving a High Sheriff of Oxfordshire award. I had nominated a person for his outstanding community work and past input to the prison and police services. This was a theme of this year's awards. Each citation and award



is given in turn and listening to the amazing contributions made to society by young (one was just 16 years of age), old, fit and disable people underlines the fact that there is so much good going on in the county. Sure, there is much to complain about (I could be a script writer for Grumpy Old Men) but there are a few people willing to stand up, indeed work vigorously to improve the lives of others. Well done to them.

March meant a short trip to Paris. Unusual purpose of travel: to take a portion of deceased person's ashes to his great friend. Travelling by Eurostar really is a great way to get to France. Maybe it was an exception, but departure and arrival was perfect to the minute both outward and homeward. Our hotel was quite close to the Gare du Nord railway station which meant getting around the city by Metro was very simple. However this time we also needed to use the RER system to a town on the

outskirts of Paris. Double decker train, clean and graffiti no worse than most UK trains. Why is it that approaches to railway stations attract the most prolific graffiti artists? We met the friend and some of her family and had an extremely pleasant lunch. Later that day back in the city we went for a stroll then the business of finding a restaurant for dinner. Spoilt for choice. It really can be a challenge making the decision that could make for a perfect evening or something of a disaster. The time was about 7.45 in the evening, almost zero degrees and too cold for us outside so having walked some distance we popped into a corner bar. Our first impression was like stepping into 1935. Outside it was really busy with drinks being served and couples sharing bar nibbles. We were almost the only people inside and it didn't seem like the place for dinner but we were persuaded to take a look at the menu. After some discussion we asked for another drink and decided to take one of the tables in the restaurant area. By now it was about 8.30. Five minutes later another couple came to sit at a table. Within 30 minutes the place was half full. By now we were tucking into the most splendid cold meats and cheese board. Not what we had had in mind whilst walking, but now enjoying the food and lapping up the Parisian atmosphere. By the time we left there were people waiting for tables

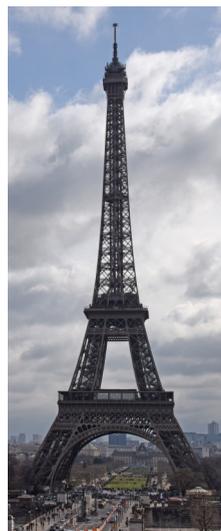
Next day we went fully into tourist mode with a visit to Le Musée du Louvre and finishing the day with a stroll through the interesting sights of the Pigalle and another wonderful meal in a restaurant not far from the Moulin Rouge. The staff looked like they had been styled by the Mafia but were in fact quite affable and we shook hands with the Godfather (who had sat watchfully at the end of the bar throughout the evening) on our way out. From here we walked back to the hotel not appreciating how close we were to the Sacré Coeur.



On the final day we felt our trip to Paris would not be complete without a visit to L' Arc de Triomphe and La Tour Eiffel. This done and dutifully

photographed (again) we made our way to la Fayette and the famous Angelina's Café - chocolate lovers heaven. Drinking-chocolate that is so thick it's difficult to pour and cakes that boast chocolate inside chocolate.

Next a quick Metro ride to the Sacré Coeur. We had forgotten the steepness of the approach. New for us were the street gambling options complete with stooges deliberately 'losing' money to entice punters to try their luck. We were not tempted.



## South Africa – Christmas 2015

Christmas, again, and need to escape the madness and find some sunshine, so I chose South Africa, along with another couple of friends. Once again a Ramblers holiday, so plenty of activity, and a good choice as the SA Rand had crashed in value.

We landed in Cape Town and drove passed a shanty town extending for what seemed like miles. We were to see many of these on the outskirts of towns. The government were building brick dwellings but because of the corruption, this was a very slow process.

We were headed for Stellenbosch where we would be staying on a vineyard for three nights. The views from our rooms were stunning. (Whilst there, we visited Stellenbosch and walked round the town's many fine houses which were kept as a living museum. We also had an interesting walk around a nature reserve in the blazing heat. We then travelled inland to Oudtshoorn in the Little Karoo, a semi-arid region, doing a very rugged walk with baboons sitting on the peaks warning of our presence. We were to get used to



this. This was an area full of ostrich farms. We walked in the Swartberg mountain range and visited the Cango Caves where the indigenous people had lived.

After a couple of nights, we moved on to Prince Albert in the Great Karoo, South Africa's heartland; a massive arid area of the country. We had a walk in the Karoo and learned about the many amazing plants there and their ways of surviving the drought. Many had medicinal properties. Umbrella's were used to shield us from the relentless sun and near 40 degree heat.

Another couple of nights here and we were off, headed for the coast and five nights in Knysna. We were to spend Christmas here and did a great walk round the Robberg Peninsula. There were many Cape fur seals basking on the rocks below; quite charming but did they smell! We also had time to swim in the sea and walk along the beach to Brenton on Sea. Unfortunately a lot of the group went down with food poisoning, myself included, and missed the Christmas Day meal. We did manage a further walk and a day at Knysna Marina with its lovely little shops and restaurants.

Christmas is very low key in South Africa. You'd hardly know it was going on really. Just the odd shop with a tree or a few baubles here and there.

We then drove the verdant Garden Route to Cape Town, lots of cattle farms with mainly Guernsey herds.

The following day we took the cable car up Table Mountain and were lucky to have a

clear day, with great views over the bay and Robben Island where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned. We visited the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens which were amazing. Another trip took us along the coast to the Cape of Good Hope where we walked along the beach to see one of the many ship wrecks. We also visited Simon's Town and the endangered breeding colony at Boulders Beach of African penguins.



Our last day, and as our flight wasn't until nearly 10pm, we enjoyed a free day in Cape Town and we found the Slave Lodge documenting the social history of South Africa fascinating and thought provoking. A very vibrant market in Greenmarket Square and watching the buskers over lunch also wiled away the time.

It was nice to be back in England and feel 'normal' instead of drained of energy by the heat but oh, these grey skies!

Article provided by Val Pelletier

## Annual Membership Subscription

It's that time of year again. Annual subscriptions are due on 1st April each year. Membership subscription for 2016 may be paid by cheque, bankers standing order or direct bank transfer. The fee is £15.00



If paying by cheque or standing order please see details on the form available from Jane Beck.

If paying by on-line direct bank transfer the following details are necessary  
Account name:- Oxford Health Service Fellowship  
Account number:- 90713155  
Sort code:- 20-65-18

In order to identify who had paid by on-line bank transfer please use the following reference details:- First 3 letters of the month last 2 digits of the year, surname and forename.(or as many letters as you can fit in the allocated space) . For example Jane's would look like this: APR16BeckJane.

# Christmas Lunch January 2016



Some people have asked me why I call it Christmas Lunch rather than New Years the answer to that is very simple I LOVE CHRISTMAS and as any child I would like it to be Christmas every week. True to this form I have almost completed my own Christmas shopping for 2016 the January sales are too good to miss.

Now I have bought quite a few goodies for the raffle for 2017, but if any of you good folks have any unwanted Christmas presents from 2016 I would be

so happy if you wanted to donate them. Or do you think there are too many? please let me know, as sometimes when they are all displayed on the table I do wonder.

The theme of outrageous bottoms was quite successful and I want to personally thank all of you that took part, Linda won the prize so well done Linda very original!!! Perhaps next year I will think of something safer as I do appreciate that coming on a bus dressed up can cause a few smiles!!! But remember it was just for fun.

Now my thanks to everybody that helped me make it such a great success, Cheryl for the really hard quiz Jane, Rosemary and Brian for coming along so early to help set it all up with out all your help I would struggle, and of course the wonderful staff at the Cotswold Lodge the room and the meal was truly wonderful and up to a standard that we have come to expect.



So, looking forward to seeing you all next year remember that there are only 100 places so get those forms in early.

Thank you every one

Report provided by Julie Aikenhead

# Walking Group

## January's Walk - The Palace and the Prince



Yet again I am hosting the January walk so I decided to keep it simple with a circuit of Blenheim Park, no mud, close to home, what could possibly go wrong? At least we had a dry morning with what seemed like patchy freezing fog. We had a short delay as Lorna had gone to the Palace and Annette had gone to the (Black) Prince.

This however enabled Vaughan and Peter to start the walk with us, as they rushed from another appointment. As we entered the park we were rewarded with an ethereal frosty mist across the lake. It wasn't a day to hang around so we continued at a fairly brisk pace to keep warm and were rewarded with some lovely bright sunshine by the time we had our coffee stop by the hump back bridge at the far side of the park. We had our usual good turnout of 26 walkers and 4 dogs. Unfortunately for Celia her dog zipped and she



zipped resulting in some nasty bruising she assures me she is well on the mend now! We continued our circuit hoping not to be stopped and charged an entry fee having crept in through the free gate. On the final leg of the walk we were rewarded with a fabulous view across the lake to the bridge, by now in brilliant sunshine. Not long until everyone was settled in the Black Prince with its

very welcome roaring fires tucking into some very reasonable pub grub. Two of you had also ordered a pudding no names mentioned!

Report provided by Kate Ovenden

Atmospheric pictures provided by Mary Saunders

### Walks programme

April	Friday 22nd	Leader: Lorna Megaw
May	Thursday 19th	Leader: Jenny Allen
June	Thursday 23rd	Leader: Dawn McNulty



Contact Andrew Moss to be included on the mailing list

## Spotlight on... Vivienne Cripps

I was born and raised in London,, where I enjoyed a very happy and fulfilled childhood with wonderful parents, who were very sociable and great fun to be with. My father enjoyed driving, no matter how far, and we had many happy holidays both in England and abroad.



My mother's parents lived in the city of Bath, where my mother was born and brought up. As a child I spent many happy holidays with my grandparents. My grandfather was very interested in history and really enjoyed taking me out and about in Bath, telling me about the history of various buildings and the people who lived there, which I loved. My father's parents lived near us in London and I also stayed with them and my cousins.

From an early age, all I ever wanted to do was to be a nurse! At the earliest opportunity I joined the Red Cross but, having spent many weeks and months as a patient during my childhood years at The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore, Middlesex, it was my dearest wish to return there as a student nurse, which at the age of 17 years I did. It was, and still is, a place very dear to my heart; with many, many happy memories of my time spent there, both as a patient and as a nurse.

My training took 2 years and at the end of this time I gained my Orthopaedic Nursing Certificate. The work was hard but rewarding, and sometimes stressful with the level of responsibility we had even as students. We were very much in awe of the Ward Sisters and the Hospital Matron. As for Sister Langton the Night Sister, ex army, we were terrified of her! We were only allowed 2 late passes a week until 11pm, and if we disobeyed this we were hauled up in front of the Matron. This happened to myself and some friends during the last month we were there – we were let off with a very mild “ticking off” from the Matron; quaking in our shoes!



I then went on to do my training to become a State Registered Nurse. I had a choice of The Royal Free; St Mary's, Paddington; UCH; Charing Cross; or The Hammersmith to apply to. I chose the Hammersmith as my friends were going there. It was very different to the RNOH, and was built next to Wormwood Scrubs Prison in East Acton. On my first day in the Nurses' Home I could not understand why so many socks with numbers on were hanging out of the cell windows of the Major Offenders Wing. It was explained to me that the prisoners wanted the nurses to write to them. During my training there we had prisoners admitted due to self-harming, and some of them I nursed. We had to accommodate the prison warders as well.

I moved from the Nurses' Home shortly after arriving there, and went to a wonderful 7 bedroomed ex rectory in Holland Park. It was paradise! A superb location. Once again we had to have hospital transport to move us to and from the hospital. It was exciting to be young and live in the middle of London. Popping down to Carnaby Street, visiting Biba's Boutique in High Street, Kensington – so dark one could hardly see what one was buying! Visiting the theatre with free tickets. Oh those carefree days.

We did have to work, though. My training at the Hammersmith was excellent. The hospital was renowned for kidney transplants, and I was fortunate to observe one transplant operation in the middle of the night. After completing my training I worked briefly as a dental nurse and then, when it opened, as a trained nurse at a brand new hospital, Northwick Park, in Harrow.

However, marriage and 2 lovely sons, Richard and David, took up a lot of my time, so I became a full-time mother and housewife. As my husband Alan was in the RAF we moved around a lot, which was both interesting and exciting. Sometimes, though, he was away on an unaccompanied tour for several months, such as the Falkland Islands, and this was not so good. We were posted to RAF Abingdon when David was 9 months old. It was then that we decided to buy our house in Marcham, where we have lived ever since!

On arriving in Oxfordshire I first worked for BUPA, going to work when Alan came home and looked after the boys, I worked in many interesting large houses, as well as the Acland Hospital, and I met some fascinating people. After a while, though, as the boys got older I moved on to working in Oxford at the JR2 and St Luke's in Headington. Finally I applied for a job at the Pain Relief Unit at Abingdon Hospital, where I spent a few very happy years. I worked with some lovely people who I still remain in touch with, and some of whom have become very dear friends.

When the Pain Relief Unit moved to the Churchill Hospital we were all given the option to transfer with the unit. Having worked in Oxford for some time I decided to stay at Abingdon Hospital to work on Ward 1. Approximately 10 years ago it became a stroke unit, with 8 stroke beds and 10 gerontology beds. I enjoyed my time on Ward 1, once again having wonderful colleagues to work with who are still my friends. I finally retired from there a year or two ago, having enjoyed many happy and fulfilled years of nursing.

In 2010 my dear mother sold the house in Cheltenham where she had lived for many years with my father before he died, and bought a retirement maisonette in our village. This was lovely as we were able to spend a lot of time enjoying many adventures together on our travels around Oxfordshire and beyond. Although my mother came from the beautiful city of Bath, she often said how much she liked Oxfordshire. Sadly she died last February, 2 weeks before her 91st birthday.

Life appears even busier now I am retired. We are very proud grandparents to 3 lovely children, Emily and Jonathan, and Daniel. We often child mind, particularly Daniel most weeks, as David and Jennie live closer. It is lovely to watch them growing up.

I also work in our community village shop one morning a week, which I love. I also work at Blenheim Palace one or two days a week, which is very interesting and so different from working in the health industry!

Life is for living – what an adventure it has been so far!

## Drowning at Newbury

Over the last few years I have dabbled with family history and had a spell of sending for various birth/death certificates. One caught my imagination, no ordinary death but Accidental death from suffocation. This was my great, great grandmother, Emma Oliver, nee Hicks. I had to investigate further.

I had the inquest date, April 20 1896, and knew she lived in Newbury so drove to the library there to check out the Newbury Weekly News which was available on microfilm.

Even though I was fascinated by the various grim stories inside previous copies, I soon arrived at the correct page with the article headed Drowning at Newbury in the Thursday April 23 1896 edition. This is the story.

A melancholy death by drowning occurred on Sunday afternoon. Mr Wm Noakes, bootmaker, was out walking about 3.30 when some little boys, who were playing round the stream with dogs, ran to him exclaiming that there was a woman in the water. He ran to the spot and found a rather elderly (she was 58) woman lying face downwards, her feet at the side of the bank and her face in the middle of the stream, covered by about nine inches of water. With assistance the body was removed but quite inanimate. The body was taken to the mortuary and an inquest held on Monday evening. The principal evidence was that of Abner Oliver (my great great grandfather). He stated that the deceased was his wife (nowhere in the article is there any mention of her name). She appeared on Sunday, better than usual, and went out for a walk in the morning. After eating a hearty dinner, she washed up and about 2.45 went out again. About half an hour later it was reported to him that his wife was dead in the stream at Northcroft close by. The deceased had been subject to fits, and sometimes dropped insensible. The last time she had a bad fit of the kind was about two years ago, when she fell upon the fire and was much injured. He had no reason whatever to think that her drowning was intentional. The pathologist, Mr R Hickman, who had examined the body and who spoke as to the face being very dark and congested, and having heard the husband's statement, said death was due to suffocation; the deceased no doubt falling into the water when under the influence of a fit. The Coroner remarked that from the evidence of the husband, together with the medical man, they could scarcely arrive at any other conclusion than that of "Accidental Death caused by falling into the water."

Coincidentally, I had parked my car in the Northcroft Lane car park and had to walk along the very stream where poor Emma had drowned.

Article provided by Val Pelletier

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**An Oxford Branch website is under construction and details will be announced at the branch meeting.**

## Congratulations!



Oxford Branch members are always pleased to be offered tea and cake after their monthly meeting. January 2016 was no exception, and this time there was special cause for celebration. Active (in more ways than one!) members Sue and Andrew Moss provided opportunity to celebrate with them their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

Another 10 years and a message from the Monarch will be landing on the door mat.

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## Luncheon Club

On March 8<sup>th</sup> we again were given an excellent meal at the City and County Bowls club. Thirty-nine members enjoyed a meal of salmon, homemade steak pie or goat's cheese and red onion tart. Jenny the cook certainly does us proud. My only regret was that I decided to have new potatoes with my steak pie instead of Jenny's delicious roast potatoes! Many of us that had chosen the apple crumble for desert also wished we had chosen fruit meringue. They looked mouth-wateringly gorgeous – certainly not good for the waistline!

At the lunch we decided to hold a raffle and the proceeds have been given to Andrew for the charity that the walking group supports.



Report provided by Linda Young

## New Theatre – a revelation

Members took to the stage during a visit to the New Theatre in February – but despite encouragement from the audience nobody offered to give us a song and dance.

Despite this lack of entertainment 50 members enjoyed a revealing visit to the 1930's art deco theatre that was state of the art when it was built and is now showing signs of its age.



Our tour, guided by Steph and Fran, took us up and down the back stairs, dressing rooms and offices where the contrast between the glamour of the 1,785 seater auditorium and the backstage labyrinth showed at its most dramatic.

We learned that shows booking the New Theatre take nearly all the revenue from ticket sales, leaving the theatre to make its money from food and drink sales. An attractive new bar – opened the day we visited – should help.

Our visit concluded with a moment on the stage – and under the stage where the original rotating stage is still there, but no longer used – a real revelation of all that goes on “behind the scenes” for a successful production.

Report provided by Andrew Moss

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## Crime Museum Uncovered at the Museum of London

Only available to view for a short period a full coach of Oxford Branch members had the opportunity to experience a range of exhibits never-before-seen by the public. Ranging from hangman's nooses, death masks, the birch, and the gun used in an attempt on Queen Victoria's life. From such real exhibits we were treated to short texts and pictures from some of the most infamous crimes of the 20th century, examples of weapons, improvised bombs and forgery. Photography was not allowed – should I wonder why!?



There also was opportunity to visit the main halls of the Museum of London. Archaeological discoveries and London's progression from pre-history to modern times made for fascinating viewing and reading. For those of us with long memories of more innocent times a video running with the Flower Pot Men, Andy Pandy and Muffin the Mule was enough to bring a tear to the eye.

A painting by Ronnie Kray was a bit spooky.

Report provided by Keith Johnston

## Palace of Westminster



The glories of the Palace of Westminster produced gasps of amazement from members lucky enough to get on the trip to the seat of British government in February.

Arranged for us by Nicola Blackwood, MP for Oxford West and Abingdon and blessed with a crisp sunny day, the visit was an unexpected delight with far more to see and learn than most of us expected. Such was the enthusiasm of the guide for the third of our groups to tour the palace that our visit over ran by half an hour and

delayed the departure of our coach. Thankfully, the remainder of the group had plenty to remember and talk about, and forgave us.

We gathered at the start in Westminster Hall, built during the reign of William Rufus, son of William the Conqueror and in more recent years the place where monarchs and statesmen lay in state before burial. The magnificent hammer beam roof (only 600 years old) looked down from a vast height.

The nineteenth century palace, designed by Charles Barry (also architect of Highclere Castle) is stunningly ornate gothic and a lesson in history in itself. It was built in 1847-52 after the original palace was largely destroyed by fire (only Westminster Hall survived) and features pictures, statues, thrones and fantastic ceilings unseen

by TV audiences familiar only with the red and green benches.

But we did walk the floor of the two houses, and imagine ourselves at the despatch box or in the speaker's chair. The whole visit was a revelation.

Report provided by Andrew Moss

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### Outings

Application forms and details from Andrew Moss or Julie Aikenhead



### Branch Meetings

1:30PM, Lecture Theatre 1,  
John Radcliffe Hospital

Apr 4<sup>th</sup> Oxford in the Great War

May 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

June 6<sup>th</sup> The History of Hats,

## Walk 62: Ancient Church and Secret Bunker

Andrew and Sue Moss arranged the walk starting in Islip and finishing at the Red Lion for lunch. It was another relatively warm day in December. Unbelievably there were honey bees and tulips in the churchyard at Woodeaton. December is the month that names and shames those responsible for misdemeanours and unintentional slips during the past twelve months programme of walks. In the dock this year included a double appearance by Kate: arranging a walk that included a pub that was closed and later in the year taking walkers to a RSPB reserve devoid of birds. Keith was fine £1.00 for repetition of photo calls



Can we believe them?



in rape seed fields. Zora faced up to her fine having been seen feeding Marmite sandwiches to some horses. In July Richard included a route passing a sewage farm - that cost him! Not to be missed out, George came clean and confessed coming to the start of his first walk on the wrong day. Another £1.00 into the pot.

The Red Lion looked after the group really well and served the most amazing pies. Proper pies, not those typically deceptive dishes seen so often these days, half-filled with a deep puff pastry top. The Red Lion is definitely recommended.

Report provided by Keith Johnston

## Walking Group Donates to Thames Valley Air Ambulance

Thames Valley Air Ambulance has written to thank our walking group for its donation of £145. The money was raised from collections on walks and from games and fines at the December walk.

The Air Ambulance has recently upgraded its



operating base and bought a new helicopter. "All these advances come with a significant price tag and we extend our gratitude for choosing to support our service" says Tara Carter from their fund raising team. "With your help we are developing this branch of emergency medicine and saving more lives than ever before."

Report provided by Andrew Moss

## WALK 64: Camels, penguins and a giraffe

This was the promise from Andrew...

*This walk has everything: mud, hills (steep ish, but not very long) views, fields, woods, a posh country club in a stately home and then (you won't believe me till you see this) camels, penguins, a giraffe and a zebra.*

Few believed it and most assumed there was a trick built into the wording. Not so. We really did see it all. Starting from Church Enstone, which in itself is has some well documented and interesting

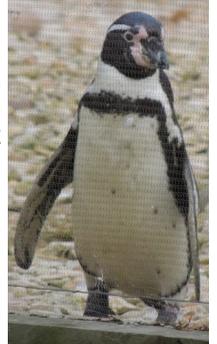


history, we passed St Kenelm's Church and were soon into the countryside fields. Having walked down a slope to a crossing point at a brook we found ourselves unable to progress as the path had changed. That meant a walk back up the hill and down again to a different crossing. Then it was uphill again.. OK the description fits so far. Onward to follow the river and a chance to refresh ourselves from flasks. On crossing the river occasional 'odd'



noises could be heard.. Not long after we found ourselves looking through bars and seeing zebra and a giraffe. Not really what you would expect in the Oxfordshire countryside. No they were not stuffed. These were real animals and now available and kept for filming. The consensus of belief amongst us was that the original reason for such exotic animals being kept here was that it was the over-wintering ground for animals in Chipperfields circus. There were crane, peacock, penguin, stork, wallabies (we think) camels and llama, (at least one of which resented being hand fed with rather poor grass). Deep roaring made us believe there to be lion in a large enclosed barn.

Still chatting about such a remarkable sight we made our way back to Church Enstone and lunch at the Crown Inn.



## Bloxham Circular Walk, 21st March

During my first walk with the group last Autumn, I found myself offering to lead one to explore the newly created Bloxham Circular Walk. On reflection as a "new girl" this seemed a bit daunting! but I decided not many walkers would want to travel "up north" to the top corner of Oxfordshire, so the group would be small. Also, Steve (Bradbury) cheerfully drove up from Wantage on several occasions to make sure the walk went well and agreed to be co-leader!



Still some mud around

Actually we were a group of 40 walkers on the day! A record number I believe. Steve and I had found a couple of potential problems on our trial runs in the autumn. There was a large herd of long (very long!) horned cattle in the first, rather steep field. They were perfectly placid with two of us, but would they be with a large group? Then on our dress-rehearsal walk just a week before the actual walk, we found the lower meadows, which had been flooded several times during the winter, were still like very wet muddy ponds surrounding the gateways. We hauled our boots out of the mud and crossed our fingers for a week of fine weather!.

The morning of the walk dawned bright and dry, the cattle were still away in their winter quarters and the gateways, though still rather muddy, were considerably better. Hoorah!

The walk, once out of the village is entirely rural, mostly pastureland with far-reaching views of North Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, amazingly with absolutely no signs of the new housing developments and industrial estates that are springing up in and around Banbury and surrounding villages. The route took us towards Broughton with a view of the back of Broughton castle among the trees, towards Tadmarton, across the Bloxham/Tadmarton road, then loops through dairy farmland, over the disused railway line which is a designated Nature Reserve and back towards the village through the meadows which are grazed by sheep.

In keeping with the rural theme of our walk the coffee stop was "rustic", with an upturned cattle trough for a table, gates laid on the ground for seating and the sound of Skylarks.

Lunch was at The Joiners Arms in the village, they were very helpful and welcoming. We thoroughly enjoyed the company of the group and it was a great pleasure to lead the walk.



Oh, Celia! Now you've set a precedent: cream scones and jam with our coffee. [Ed]

Report provided by Celia Day

Copy date for Summer 2016 newsletter is Friday 18th June 2016