

Publicity document: VPV at Boars Hill/Sunningwell

with equipment funded by TOE

September 2024

The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) provided a grant to the Vale Path Volunteers (VPV), the path maintenance team of the Vale of White Horse Ramblers. This was to buy new, greener tools for improving the accessibility of footpaths in the Vale. In August the VPV used the new tools to clear footpaths in Longworth and on Boars Hill in Sunningwell.

"Knowing how hard the VPV work maintaining paths around the District, we were delighted to award them a grant for new tools" said Rachel Sanderson, Head of Community Grants at TOE. "These unsung heroes work throughout the year in all weathers and their invaluable work is much appreciated by countless walkers. It's great to see the new tools being put to good use and immediately making footpaths easier for us all to enjoy thanks to the VPV."

"Our heavy petrol-driven long-handled hedgecutter was proving problematic," said Pat Rosum, coordinator of the VPV. "We wanted to replace it with a lighter, greener battery-driven hedgecutter for mid-level trimming, a manual lightweight telescopic pruner for higher tree branches, and a robust pruning saw for thick stems. Also, these tools can be carried by three different volunteers, making it more comfortable than our older hedgecutter for getting to and from the target footpaths."

Blackthorn, brambles, briar, nettles and thistles blighted the 450-yard-long footpath from Lincombe Lane past Bayworth Residential Park to Brumcombe Lane in Sunningwell. This made it hazardous to walk along, no doubt deterring many locals, especially since another path connecting it through a historic quarry to the village had become impassable for some years. "Now both paths are accessible, thanks to the clearance work of the VPV, and will be widely used, helped by the publicity they can be given through parish websites and newsletters," said Bob Evans, a local Rambler and dog-walker. Besides affording a splendid panorama of the Vale of White Horse, they link to a network of other popular walks in both Sunningwell and Wootton.

The new tools, in combination with the VPV's existing ones, were extremely effective in restoring the Sunningwell footpath to provide a wide, scratch-free route along Boars Hill, with its lovely views over the surrounding countryside.

ENDS

Additional notes

Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) Ltd is a charity and a non-profit making company. TOE is helping local people restore nature, tackle the climate emergency and connect with Oxfordshire's wild side. We're Oxfordshire's independent environmental funder. Our Local Environment Fund raises money and allocates grants for local projects that benefit wildlife, people and the planet.

TOE provides strategic support and funding for local communities who want to promote and improve the biodiversity of Oxfordshire's wildlife habitats and increase access to the local countryside and green spaces. TOE is grateful for the continued support of Grundon Waste Management Ltd whose support via the Landfill Communities Fund makes an important contribution to the sustainability of Oxfordshire's environment. TOE works with a range of other funders including individual supporters, the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, local authorities and local businesses. If you have a local project that needs funding or if you would like to know how to provide support for TOE, please contact ben.taylor@trustforoxfordshire.org.uk

Vale of White Horse (VOWH) Ramblers is one of 10 Ramblers groups in Oxfordshire who provide group walks led by experienced leaders www.ramblers-oxon.org.uk. Ramblers has over 500 such groups throughout England and Wales. It is a charity devoted to opening the way for everyone to enjoy the simple pleasures of walking, to protecting the places in which people love to wander, and improving access to them www.ramblers.org.uk.

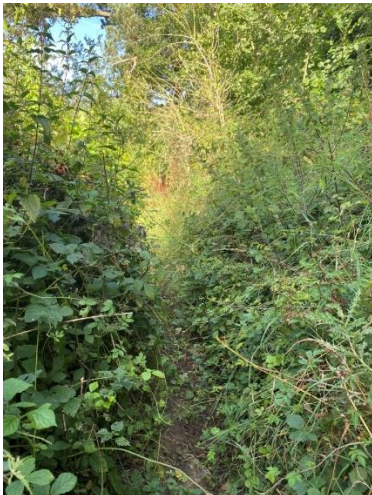
The Vale Path Volunteers, the path maintenance team of VOWH Ramblers, was started in 2012. In the subsequent 10 years the volunteers cut back vegetation along 31 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways. During that time the number of volunteers increased, as did the frequency of path clearance, to twice each month. During 2023 the VPV improved 6 miles of public rights of way.

Contact Pat Rosum (patrick.rosum@hotmail.co.uk) for more information on the VPV, to report an overgrown right of way in the Vale of White Horse, or to join the Volunteers.



PHOTOS

Section of FP6 before clearance



After clearance



The new battery-operated hedgecutter funded by Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment



The new light-weight extendable pruner



Clearing lower level vegetation with pruning saw and loppers



Homeward bound, job done.



Eight of the nine members of the VPV team at Boars Hill

